ESSAYS

VOLUME FOUR

Sermons and Essays

Dallas Burdette

2026
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Essays

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About This Collection

This volume contains sermons and essays written by Dr. Dallas Burdette of Montgomery, Alabama, during the last decade of the 20th century and into the early 21st. They were published for a number of years on his website, Freedom in Christ, before being archived on Archive.org. They have been combined here into a single volume, organized by topic, for ease of distribution.

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B. D. Lewis
Gratidão Publishing
August 4, 2026

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Biographical Material on the Life R. L. (Pat) Kilpatrick

Pat Kilpatrick, as he is commonly called among his many friends, is one of the great leaders within the Restoration Movement initiated by the Campbells and Stone. He is one of the great defenders of Christian unity for which Jesus prayed. I first met Kilpatrick in Bethany West Virginia. I attended a lecture program in which a number of outstanding speakers appeared on the program, and Pat was present for this great gathering of spiritual leaders.

BRIEF FAMILY HISTORY

Richard (Pat) L. Kilpatrick was born on 14 March 1927 in Greenfield, Ala. His father, Robert F. Kilpatrick, was born in 1891 in Tennessee. His mother, Lorena Roden, was born in 1890 in Alabama and died in 1963. His father preached for thirty-five years and established seventeen congregations, mostly in north Alabama.

Kilpatrick received his education from the school of "Hard Knocks," so he tells me. This, he says, qualifies him for several degrees. He did manage to complete two years of college credits with Southern Mississippi University. Also, he was a technical writer for Redstone Arsenal for a number of years. He published his first journal (*Ensign Fair*) in 1973, which is still published as of September 1999.

EARLY CHURCH WORK ON ISLAND OF GUAM

Kilpatrick was never a “full-time” preacher, but, in a number of churches, he often filled in until the congregation could locate a full-time preacher. For example, one such church was on the island of Guam; this congregation was a military congregation with no located preacher. Since the church had no paid minister, the male members took their turn in preaching and teaching. While stationed on Guam, one of the worst typhoons ever to strike land (over 210 mph winds) in the Pacific destroyed the church building. For the next several months, the congregation worshipped in a tent. This brought the church closer

together than anything else that could have happened.

KILPATRICK'S RETURN TO THE STATES

After Kilpatrick returned to the States, he worshipped with the Rodenberg Church of Christ in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he began a work with the black brethren and established the Nixon Street Church of Christ. Following his retirement from the Air Force, he returned home and began another career with the Army Civil Service, Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Alabama. During this period of employment, he began to work with local churches in preaching and teaching. He worked with a number of congregations: (1) Huntsville [West Huntsville Church of Christ], (2) Ardmore, Tennessee, (3) Madison, Alabama, (4) New Hope, Alabama, and (5) Greenfield, Alabama [his home congregation and where he was baptized].

DESCRIPTION OF R. L. KILPATRICK'S MINISTRY

Publication of Ensign Fair

Beginning in May 1973, while worshipping with the Farley congregation in south Huntsville, Ala., Richard Kilpatrick began publication of a journal to provide communication between sister congregations. At that time, there were fifty congregations (Churches of Christ) in Madison County, but there was neither cooperation nor communication among them. The congregations were not working together; it was as if each congregation was in its own world, apart from all other Christians. He envisioned the congregations working together to exhibit greater powers and force for the cause of Christ. In order to alert the various congregations to their practice of isolationism, he wrote an article, "I've Got A Secret," to chide the congregations for not revealing to other sister congregations their activities. In other words, the various congregations never revealed their secrets, that is to say, what they were doing or planning to do in their Christian ministries.

Banishment from Farley Church of Christ

After three years, the Farley congregation banished him, along with the Ensign, the name of his journal. Up to that time, he had experienced a good relationship with the congregation.[1] But several legalistic brethren infiltrated, from the Lincoln congregation, the Farley church. These brethren from Lincoln had just been kicked out of that congregation. Kilpatrick says that the Lincoln congregation "had been split so many times they had very little left to split." This legalistic group now provided the majority. Thus, as a result of this influx of members, the new members were able to gain control and oust Kilpatrick and his journal.

Kilpatrick says that there were vague charges made against his articles in the Ensign. One such allegation centered on the means of justification, by law or faith. In a letter to this author, Kilpatrick writes:

> There were vague charges made about the teachings of the magazine. The main charge seems to have been a statement I made in one article, to wit: "When Paul said that we are not justified by law, he meant ANY law." "There you have it,"

they said, “You said we don’t live under any law.” I pointed out that what I said was that we are not **JUSTIFIED** by any law.[2]

Kilpatrick looks back on the events that occurred as a blessing from God. He says, “Looking back on it I am convinced that God was behind it all because I was somewhat curtailed in what I wrote in the magazine in reference to 'law and grace' for I knew the effect it would have on our legalistic brethren in the congregation.”[3] Since the congregation financed the monthly journal, he felt a certain amount of loyalty to them. He told this author that God set him free from the shackles of bondage so that he could write what he perceived to be the truth and what the church really needed to hear. How did God accomplish this feat? God accomplished this freedom through the castigation of Kilpatrick by the church. Yes, the congregation excommunicated him.

He says that this was probably the lowest point in his spiritual life. He kept asking God why He was doing this to him. About this same time of spiritual depression, he received a letter from Carl Ketcherside, editor of Mission Messenger, encouraging him “to be proud to be kicked out of the Farley church rather than having to gnaw my leg off to escape!”[4] As a result of this letter, Kilpatrick reflected upon the situation; and he was convinced that this was God’s strategy for his ministry for the advancement of God’s kingdom on earth.

Prayer for Understanding

Before these catastrophic events, as he perceived them at the time, occurred, he prayed that God would help him to understand the book of Romans. Kilpatrick told this author that God answered his prayers. But when he began to share his understanding of justification by faith with other believers, he felt the sting of opposition. As a result of this hostility, he added an appendix to his prayer: “Lord, give me the courage to preach what I understand.”[5]

Imputed Righteousness.

Kilpatrick says that he is not sure when he began to understand “imputed righteousness,” but this insight became solidified in his thinking through the study of Anders Nygren’s commentary on Romans. He says that he wrote a three part series on “imputed righteousness” in May, June, and July 1975 issues of *Ensign Fair*. In the June 1976 issue of *Ensign Fair*, he wrote an article entitled “The Gates of Paradise” to relate the experiences of Martin Luther to his own struggles. He has been editor of Ensign for approximately twenty-six years; this ministry has been the major focus of his service in the Lord’s kingdom. Kilpatrick is well known for his labors toward unity among Christians of all denominations, especially among the Churches of Christ.

KILPATRICK’S VIEW OF LEADERSHIP

Pastoral/Leadership

Within the Churches of Christ, the so-called pastor system that is acceptable among many denominations is not a viable option or practice, or so it is argued. Even though Churches of Christ do hire pulpit ministers, nevertheless, they still do not occupy the same position

of authority as some clergy do in other denominations. Within the Churches of Christ, the controversy of power revolves around the so-called "authority" of the elders, not the authority of the clergy.[6] Today, within the Churches of Christ, elders function more in the capacity of a board of directors. To disagree with many elders is the same as disagreeing with God. They often do not make a distinction between their hand-me-down interpretations of God's Word and the Word itself.

Kilpatrick does not object to a congregation supporting someone to do full-time work, that is to say, one's total financial livelihood from the church. But the person so hired should not exercise authority over the congregation. Neither does Kilpatrick renounce appointment of elders to shepherd the flock, but he does repudiate the "authority" philosophy assumed by many elders. He asserts that elders are to teach and to encourage individuals to live pure lives. His view on leadership within the Churches of Christ is one of the most controversial issues facing the Churches of Christ today.

Kilpatrick vigorously presents reasons why Christians cannot allow a group of men to exercise authority over them. He advocates the priesthood of all believers, not just a select few. In his editorial for *The Ensign Fair* in 1978, he set forth views that shocked the denominational Church of Christ. In this article, he postulates three reasons why elders cannot be "rulers" of the church. First, he says correctly,

> He who rules a nation is the "head" of that nation. He who rules the church is the "head" of the church. If elders rule a congregation, then the elders are the "head" of the congregation. If all congregations were consolidated into one body, then the elders would become the head of the combined body. Since all congregations do, in fact, constitute the one body of Christ (Eph. 4:4)), then the elders are the "head" of the church of Christ <u>on earth</u>! This has to mean that Jesus was mistaken when he said that God had given him "ALL authority in heaven AND ON EARTH" (Mat. 28:18), since the elders rule "on earth." However, we prefer to believe Jesus.[7]

Second, he explains, "If elders have 'official authority' to rule the church, then it follows that members are under divine orders to 'obey' their rulers."[8] If Christians are under orders to obey elders, then, Kilpatrick reasons, the elders will have to answer to God on behalf of the church members, since members are to obey their rulers. Again, he writes: "Are members under the authority of Christ in one instance and under the authority of elders in another?"[9]

In August 1986, Kilpatrick wrote a powerful essay refuting the hierarchical structure adopted by many Churches of Christ.[10] He explains the desire for power in this way:

> Since the beginning of time man has had the lust for power and authority. It entered into the nature of man with the advent of sin. It is a gift of Satan, a work of the flesh, and belongs in the category of "pride." It does something for man's pride to be able to give the orders. He loves the praise and prestige and the feeling of importance. He will scheme and connive, he will lie, cheat, and even murder to gain control. That's the way the world has always been and it will never be any different.[11]

Once more, Kilpatrick captures this concept of authority as he recalls Jesus' startling conversation about his disciples' vision of domination in the coming kingdom. "When you talk about a kingdom and king, and law and subjects," writes Kilpatrick, "someone has to be at the top, do they not??"[12] Again, in order to focus upon the place of absolutism within the kingdom of heaven, Kilpatrick analyzes the dialogue between Jesus and his apostles. In this exchange, Jesus calls attention to a revolutionary concept, not power mentality, but servant comprehension. Matthew records the following account:

> But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers (a[rconte", *archontes*) of the Gentiles lord it over (κατακυριευψουσιν katakurieuousin) them, and *their* great men exercise authority over (κατεξουσιαψζουσιν katexousiazousin) them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."[13]

Kilpatrick correctly points out: "It was a difficult thing for the disciples to grasp."[14] Again, he aptly stresses the shock that the apostles experienced in this revolutionary concept of greatness; Kilpatrick also makes the following succinct observation: "How revolutionary! Whoever heard of a kingdom in which the lowly servant would be the greatest! How can the last be 'first' and how can slaves have such prominence?"[15] His assessment of the contemporary situation is full of insight. Here is what he says:

> It seems that for awhile the point was understood in the first century, but with the passage of time and the natural lust for power coupled with the difficulty of understanding the point, the church soon had its rulers, just like the Gentiles; first its plurality of bishops over the congregation, then the emergence of a chief Bishop, the chief bishop over several congregations. Eventually a Bishop over all churches in a province, and finally a Super Bishop, the Pope.[16]

Kilpatrick looks at the KJV and its translators to determine the philosophy behind the translation to determine its impact upon the Christian community in its concept of leadership and authority. He concludes that King James viewed the church in the same way that one might view a kingdom. He says, "The church, in the mind of the king, and in the minds of some of our people, was synonymous with 'kingdom,' an 'institution' that was worldwide in scope."[17] In other words, the king saw no distinction between church and state. Thus, he considered himself to be the head of the church as well as the head of the state; they were one and the same.[18]

Many Christians often interpret the term elder not to denote older men, but as a noun to describe an office or rank. It is a popular error, writes Kilpatrick, to employ "the use of the word 'elder' and 'elders' . . . as a noun, whereas in the Greek it is an adjective."[19] He further states that the word elder "is a descriptive word, denoting age."[20] He cites Paul's words to Timothy as an example of the proper use of the word elder. For example, Paul writes: "Rebuke not an elder (Πρεσβυτεψρώ presbuterw), but entreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren;"[21] Then, Kilpatrick writes, "The RSV has the correct rendition of it, 'Do not rebuke an older man (*presbuteros*) but exhort him as you would a father.'"[22] Once more, to illustrate the adjective function of this word, he calls attention to verse two: "The elder women (πρεσβυτεψρὰ presbuteras)

as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity." [23] He also reasons that if the word 'elder' in verse 17 has reference "to a ruling class of brethren, then it must surely have the same meaning in verse 1 (and the same for 'women' in verse 2).[24]

Kilpatrick writes that "We can search the scriptures through and through and we will not discover an 'officer' in the church. There is no office of elder, or bishop, or anything else in the sense in which these words are now understood."[25] Again, he says, "*Bishop* is a functional word and refers to a 'work' rather than a person."[26] His view of ministry is that there are no offices or officers within the kingdom, only functions.

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[1] The Farley church of Christ, 12112 S. Memorial Parkway, Huntsville, Ala. 35803, originally sponsored this paper. See R. L. Kilpatrick, ed., *The Ensign Fair*, 1, no. 1 (May 1973): 2.

[2] R. L. (Pat) Kilpatrick, "Written Especially for Dallas Burdette Who Really Knows How to Make It Hard on a Person," written at the request of an interview by Dallas Burdette, 28 April 1997, Huntsville, Ala.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Kilpatrick, "Written Especially for Dallas Burdette," 3.

[6] This question of authority on the part of preachers in Churches of Christ is only partly true; some preachers do execute terrifying power. Also, editor-bishops exercise great power to keep the people under control in doctrinal matters. Within the Churches of Christ, each major faction publishes its own party journal. This journal becomes the rallying point around which orthodoxy is determined. For one to disagree with some editor, then, generally, this is tantamount to disagreeing with God Himself.

[7] R. L. Kilpatrick, "Three More Reasons Why Elders Cannot Be 'rulers' of the Lord's Church," in *The Ensign Fair* 6 no. 5 (September 1978): 2.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] R.L. Kilpatrick, "The Continuing Influence of King James," in *Ensign* XV no 7 (August 1986), 122f.

[11] Ibid. 122.

[12] Ibid.

[13] *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

[14] Kilpatrick, “The Continuing Influence of King James,” 122.

[15] Ibid. 122.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid. 136.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. 138.

[20] Ibid.

[21] First Timothy 5: 1, *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769

[22] Kilpatrick, “The Continuing Influence of King James,” 138.

[23] First Timothy 5:2, *The King James Version*.

[24] Kilpatrick, “The Continuing Influence of King James,” 139.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid. Kilpatrick’s analysis is full of insight; it is well worth reading in its entirety.

Confirmation of Will Oldfield to the Ministry: July 13, 2002

Thrust Statement: **When one preaches the word of truth, he or she is proclaiming the gospel, namely, Jesus as God's way of salvation.**

Scripture Reading: **2 Timothy 4:1-2**

INTRODUCTION

Tonight, this congregation—Oakwood Hills—has assembled in order to confirm its decision to recognize Will Oldfield's resolution to devote himself to the service of God in a public fashion of preaching and teaching. Even though there are many texts that this congregation could call attention to in admonishing Will about his responsibilities in his service to the Lord, yet there is one Scripture that stands out—a Scripture that rings a clarion call. This Scripture is none other than Paul's words found in **2 Timothy 4:2**—"preach the word." This study of **Second Timothy 4:1-2** is to remind Will Oldfield of his responsibilities as a teacher within the new humanity created by our Lord Jesus Christ. One could title this message: "The Oakwood Hills' Charge to Will Oldfield: Preach the Word." Tonight, Will Oldfield is receiving the blessings of the Oakwood Hills church as he is officially selected by the congregation to assume the role of teacher in his work with the congregation. Not everyone aspires to teach in a public way, but for those who do, such as Will Oldfield, the congregation should support him in this endeavor. It is in this regard that Paul addresses the congregation at Corinth. He writes the following words about those who have embarked on the path of responsibility to the saints:

> You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, [16] to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. [17] I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus

arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. [18] For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition (**1 Corinthians 16:15-18**).[1]

When one undertakes the responsibility of pastoring a congregation, one assumes great accountability in such a charge. Not only is one responsible for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but also one is accountable for maintaining himself as an example to all believers. Every leader is to set forth himself as a model of imitation for everyone to pattern his/her life after. One who leads, writes Paul, "must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful" (**2 Timothy 2:24**).

Will Oldfield, this congregation reminds you that as you devote yourself to the service of the saints, you must assume these three characteristics set forth by Paul in his farewell letter to Timothy—"be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful." These are basic qualifications. If one is lacking in these qualifications, he is not going to make the kind of leader who can lead the people of God in the most effective way to bring honor to God. As one embarks upon the ministry, one should bear in mind that the goal of every leader is to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Again, the congregation exhorts you also to remember some of the negatives as well as the positives of true leadership. Paul writes to Titus the following traits that should be adopted and the traits that should not be adopted:

Since an overseer[b] is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. [8] Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. [9] He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (**Titus 1:7-9**).

The words in **verse 9**—"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught"—are calling attention to the necessity of being true to the Gospel, that is, God's way of salvation. This is the substance of Paul's charge to Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:2**—"preach the word." Will Oldfield, even though you are not being appointed as an "overseer," nevertheless, you are being appointed as a leader and preacher and teacher of God's Word. You are being "entrusted with God's work"; therefore, this congregation requests that you carefully and prayerfully seek to adopt or put on these qualifications, as listed in **Titus 1:7-9**, in your desire to devote yourself to the service of the saints. Remember, any individual who undertakes the ministry of the Word, as a preacher and teacher, should be conscious of the dignity of the ministry. One should view the ministry as a glorious privilege to serve Christ. Paul felt something of this privilege when he wrote to the Ephesians:

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. [8] Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to make plain to everyone the administration of this

mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things (**Ephesians 1:7-9**).

Just as Paul became a servant of the Gospel of Christ as a result of God's grace, so, too, those who have undertaken a ministry of preaching should also reflect upon their gift of God's grace. There is a sense in which every preacher or teacher is a steward of the mysteries of God. It is in this regard that Paul writes about those proclaiming the Good News of God's way of salvation: "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. [2] Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (**1 Corinthians 4:1-2**).

Yes, there is a sense in which the Gospel of Christ is entrusted to those who are instructors in the Word. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, writes about the glorious Gospel: "the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me" (**1 Timothy 1:11**). Then Paul thanks Jesus Christ for such favor: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service" (**1:12**). Earlier, Paul, in his farewell to the leaders at Ephesus, explained the troubles that lie ahead for himself, but at the same time, he rejoiced in his privilege of proclaiming the Good News of God:

> I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. [24] However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace (**Acts 20:23-24**).

As one faces hardships in life, one must keep in mind that "testifying to the gospel of God's grace" is what really matters, not one's luxury in life. Paul desired to finish his course with joy. He wanted to run the Christian race with faithfulness and diligence to the very end. In fact, Paul, while awaiting his execution, tells Timothy:

> For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. [7] I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. [8] Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing (**2 timothy 4:6-8**).

Will Oldfield, this same tenacity should be your aim—fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith. Having said this, it goes almost without saying that every Christian, too, is engaged in the Christian race, not just ministers of the Word, that is, those whose lives are dedicated to public service. Listen to Paul as he describes the Christian life:

> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. [25] Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. [26] Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. [27] No, I beat my

> body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (**1 Corinthians 9:24-27**).

Every evangelist, every teacher, and every leader should strive for the crown of God without wavering. Paul was conscious of his own behavior. Are you conscious of your own behavior? You must control your external behavior. Listen to Paul again: ", I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." Will Oldfield, this body of believers calls attention to the words of Paul to Timothy in order that you, too, might reflect upon your own actions in your relationship to other believers:

> Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. [13] Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. [14] Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. [15] Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. [16] Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (**1 Timothy 4:12-16**).

The eyes of everyone in this congregation are on you. Will, you should live in such a way that "everyone may see your progress." Even though Timothy received a special gift from God, still he was told to be diligent in his every day life to set forth himself as an example so that others, too, could emulate him in his daily walk with God. God has entrusted Paul with the Gospel, and Paul entrusted the Gospel to Timothy, and now Paul wants Timothy to also entrust the Gospel to others:

> You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. [2] And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (**2 Timothy 2:1-2**).

Even though every Christian is a minister of this reconciliation, nevertheless, the Scriptures are quite clear that there is a special group of individuals who take the lead in seeking to instruct the people of God. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, writes:

> Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. [13] Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other (**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**).

The words "who work hard among you" can be translated from the Greek text as, "the ones laboring among you" (τουΨ κοπιω'ψτά εςν υΣμά', tous kopiwtas en Jumas), and the words "over you in the Lord" can be translated as, "taking the lead of you in the Lord" (προι>σταμεψνοϋ υΣμω'ν εςψν κυριψω, proistamenous Jumwn en kuriw). In the first century, God gave certain individuals to the church in order that they in turn could perfect the saints in the work of the ministry. Listen to Paul as he enumerates God's gifts:

> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [12] to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [13] until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. [14] Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. [15] Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. [16] From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (**Ephesians 4:11-16**).

One responsibility of every teacher is to prepare God's people for "works of service" in order that the body of Christ might be joined and held together as each member does its work to promote the growth of the Christian community. Will Oldfield, it is in this capacity that the Oakwood Hills congregation is selecting you in order that you might help the believers to perform their works of service.

PREACH THE WORD:

THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION

One text that stands out prominently, as mentioned above, in the minds of all who desire to preach and teach the Word of God is **2 Timothy 4:1-5**. Paul, in this pericope, issues a solemn charge to Timothy to preach the Gospel of Christ. Paul sets forth the very kernel of Christian ministry when he pens:

> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: [2] Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. [3] For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. [4] They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. [5] But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (**2 Timothy 4:1-5**).

Paul wants Timothy to understand something of the weightiness of his mission. Thus, Paul writes: "I give you this charge" (**4:1**). Paul wants Timothy to recognize something of the gravity of this vocation and, at the same time, to sense the importance of assuming the responsibility of the role of leadership. In order for Paul to call attention to this task, he writes: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge" (**4:1**). Every teacher must reflect upon the fact that one day he will face God and Jesus Christ will judge him. Hopefully, this consciousness of Jesus' judgment will give encouragement to Timothy to keep going, even when one faces daily the trials and

tribulations of life. Paul reinforces the solemnity of this call by calling attention to the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

First and foremost, the charge is to "preach the Word." The words in the Greek text read: κηψρυξον τοΨν λοψγον (khruxon ton logon). This phrase connotes the substance of his preaching—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The word *word* stands as a summary for the "Gospel." This "Word of God" is defined in the beginning of this epistle:

> So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, [9] who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, [10] but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [11] And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. [12] That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day (**2 Timothy 1:8-12**).

Paul did not want Timothy to fail to preach the gospel without commitment, even to the point of suffering. But, in addition to his faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel, he also wanted him to entrust the gospel to others who would be "reliable men," and who also would be "qualified to teach others" (**2:2**). Immediately, Paul gives the substance of the message: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel" (**2:8**). Earlier, he told Timothy to "Guard (φυλαψσσω, p&ulassw) the good deposit (παραθηψκη, paraqhkh) that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (**1:14**). Then, he instructs him to "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (**2:15**).

The "word of truth" in **2:15** is the same as the "deposit" in **1:14**. In other words, Paul wants Timothy to defend the Gospel. For a second time, attention is called to the citation in **1:14,** because there is a charge to Timothy to guard the Gospel. Then, in **2:3, 8-9**, he charges Timothy to suffer for the Gospel. Over again, in **3:3-14**, he instructs him to continue in the gospel. As one reflects upon the Scriptures, one can hardly overlook Paul's sketch of the Gospel in **1:8-10**. In **1:8-10**, Paul reveals that the gospel is an account of not so much of what Christ has done, even though it is that, as it is of what God has done "in" and "through" Christ. Paul presents the same thought in his second letter to Corinth (**5:17-19**). The following is a parallel chart of these two pericopes:

2 Timothy 1:8-10	**2 Corinthians 5:17-19**
But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, [9] who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.	Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, [10] but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.	reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

The gospel is the good news of salvation, that is to say, the good news of our savior Jesus Christ. "The word of truth" equals the "gospel," and the "gospel" is sometimes called salvation, righteousness, mystery, deposit, the word of truth, and life. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, writes: "The faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel" (**Colossians 1:5**). James, too, speaks in this fashion: "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created" (**James 1:18**).

Paul, in writing to the Christians at Ephesus, says: "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation (**Ephesians 1:13**). Also, in the **Book of Ephesians**, he defines the Gospel as the "mystery of his will" (**1:9**). The word *mystery* occurs seven times in this short epistle. This "mystery" is about God's scheme of redemption "in" and "through" Christ. In fact, in the Colossian letter, Paul expresses it this way:

Colossians 1:25-28	**Colossians 2:2-5**
I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— [26] the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. [27] To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.	My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [4] I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. [5] For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Just a perusal of the **Book of Ephesians** reveals that the Gospel is about how God creates one people, which consists of both Jew and Gentile reconciled unto God in "one body" by the "one Spirit." In other words there is a new humanity in Jesus. All barriers have been broken down (**2:11-22**). All racial barriers are gone (see also **Galatians 3:26-29**). When the angelic host sung a song about the gospel of God, they sung about how God had purchased all men to God through His shed blood. Listen to John as he records

this event as he listened in on this wonderful revelation:

> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits [a] of God sent out into all the earth. [7] He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. [8] And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. [9] And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. [10] You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (**Revelation 6-10**).

This is what the Gospel of God has accomplished—redemption for "every tribe and language and people and nation." God through Jesus reconciled the world unto Himself. This is a part of the mystery that had been hidden from ages past. No wonder Paul tells Timothy: "Preach the word." One can hardly read Paul's last letter without a consciousness of the importance of the Gospel in one's walk with God. Paul instructed Timothy to guard the Gospel that had been entrusted to him: "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (**2 Timothy 1:14**). Prior to this exhortation, Paul employs the words "sound teaching' to describe the Gospel (**1:13**). For Paul, the Gospel is both a pattern (υΣποτυψπωσϊ, &upotupwsis) of sound words (**1:13**) and a precious deposit (**1:14**).

Paul refers to himself as a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the gospel, or good deposit entrusted to him: "And of this gospel I was appointed a herald (κη'ρυξ, khrux) and an apostle (αζποψστολö, apostolos) and a teacher (διδαψσκαλö, didaskalos)" (**1:11**). Christians frequently distinguish between κηψρυγμα (khrugma, "what is preached: the message, or proclamation") and διδαχηψ (didach, "what is taught"). This distinction is helpful, but it can be overstated. In the words of John W. Stott: "There was a lot of didach in the khrugma and a lot of khrugma in the didach."[2] Even though one proclaims the message of salvation, nevertheless, one also teaches about the implications of the gospel and the moral ethical behavior that results from one's acceptance of Jesus as one's Lord. Every khrugma must itself contain much didach.

Every one who preaches and teaches should bear in mind that the Gospel is a treasure placed in earthen vessels, that is "entrusted to your care" (**1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:14**). The Gospel was deposited with Paul; Paul deposited the gospel with Timothy; and it can be said today that the Gospel is deposited with the church. When one undertakes the responsibility of shepherding the flock of God, one should always remember that God, as it were, has deposited in that individual the responsibility of preaching the gospel that Paul preached (see **Galatians 1:6-9**). There are many Christians today who are bent on perverting the Gospel of God, that is to say, proclaiming another way of salvation other than by faith in Jesus.

There is a sense of urgency in the proclamation and teaching of the gospel. To

"preach the word" (**4:2**) is equivalent to "the deposit" (**1:14**), "sound doctrine" (**4:3**), "the truth" (**4:4**), and "the faith" (**4:7**). No one has the right to change God's way of salvation. Thus, there is an urgency of tone in this last letter of Paul to Timothy: "be prepared in season and out of season" (4:2). The words "be prepared" are from the Greek word εςφιψστημι (ep&isthmi), which literally means to "stand by." In other words, he is telling Timothy to always be on hand, or be ready, to preach the word. He does not want Timothy to ever overlook his sense of urgency in preaching Jesus. Then Paul adds: "in season and out of season" (**4:2**). Paul is encouraging to Timothy to always press home the message of salvation on all occasions—convenient or inconvenient. This statement is not an excuse for rudeness, but rather a biblical appeal against laziness. God wants his preachers to be on duty all the time. Paul does not want Timothy to fail to remember his sense of urgency—neither should preachers and teachers relax in this sense of urgency to proclaim Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Will Oldfield, the congregation at Oakwood Hills reminds you that one should always be cautious that one does not preach to elevate himself, but rather one should preach in order to glorify God. Paul writes: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (**2 Corinthians 4:5**). This congregation calls attention to the words of Paul in his farewell discourse to the Ephesian Elders; in his closing remarks, he calls attention to his faithfulness in preaching the gospel: "For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (**Acts 20:27**). The gospel, too, was to be Timothy's lifework. In spite of defection on the part of many, Paul warns Timothy: "But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (**2 Timothy 4:5**). This congregation also encourages you to "do the work of an evangelist" and to "discharge all the duties of your ministry."

The Good News of God should be constantly on your mind, just as it was to be on the mind of Timothy. Just as Timothy was told to "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel" (**2:8**), so the saints at Oakwood Hills also encourage you to reflect upon these words as you seek to serve in God's kingdom. Timothy was to spurn no part of his ministry for God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. Yes, every modern day minister of God should also remember Paul's admonition to Timothy—"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel."

What if things do not go well in your ministry? How should you react if things in your ministry do not always go well? The answer to these two questions lies in the words of Paul to Timothy, "keep your head in all situations" and still "discharge all your duties of ministry." As a minister you must teach. You are called to teach. You must be a strong teacher. You must not waiver in your duties. In concluding this message, the words of Paul to Timothy, in his first letter, should ring loud and clear in your ears:

> Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. [13] Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. [14] Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic

message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. [15] Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. [16] Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (**1 Timothy 4:12-16**).

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[1] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), unless stated otherwise.

[2] John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1973), 42.

Kilpatrick's Concept of Leadership

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND PRACTICE: OGDEN, FISHER, CARROLL, AND KILPATRICK

Ogden: The New Reformation

This essay weaves Kilpatrick's concept of leadership into the discussion of Ogden's, Fisher's, and Carroll's concepts of leadership.[1] One objective of this article is to compare the leadership styles of Ogden, Fisher, and Carroll with that of Kilpatrick. Ogden calls for a "new reformation" within the Christian ministry. His "Introduction" focuses upon the "unfinished business" of the restoration of the priesthood of all believers.[2] He reflects upon Luther's statement: "Everyone who has been baptized may claim that he already has been consecrated a priest, bishop or pope."[3] For Ogden, every Christian is God's representative. In other words, each believer is God's guardian to the other believer, and, in a sense, each believer is a go-between for the other before God. Ogden puts it this way:

> The New Reformation seeks nothing less than the radical transformation of the self-perception of all believers so we see ourselves as vital channels through whom God mediates his life to other members of the body of Christ and the world.[4]

One of the revolutionary concepts in ministry is that "All God's people are ministers," writes Ogden.[5] Even though the Reformers sought to restore the priesthood of all believers, they never fully renewed the reality of this belief or biblical custom. The clerical structure of the church continued to dominate the lives of men and women throughout the Reformation period. Even today, this philosophy of Institutionalism is still practiced among many denominations. This traditional power structure is a carry over from the Reformation. Kilpatrick also describes well the Protestant dilemma: "The

truth is that the whole ecclesiastical structure of Protestantism is built upon the tradition of the Roman church, not upon the traditions of the apostles."[6]

One objective in Ogden's book is to recapture the servant/leadership model of ministry. He desires the recapturing of the "church as a living organism."[7] He states it nicely, when he writes:

> Everyone has a part in this play. Every believer is a necessary part of the drama that God is producing, the drama of salvation history. We are on stage together, pastors and people alike. There is no longer a select, professional union of actors. In the body of Christ, all the 'actors' have a direct connection to the Producer, the Creator, and the Choreographer of History. The debilitating class distinction between clergy and laity is dashed. The pastor no longer plays all the parts, but like a director draws out the hidden talents of myriad actors and encourages them to perform according to their skills.[8]

For Ogden, "Christianity is essentially a lay movement."[9] Generally speaking, this is not the concept practiced by churches as a whole. Nevertheless, he does seem to have fully assessed the typical so-called worship service as practiced by most churches, and he has also captured forcefully the deterioration prevalent within many Christian communities. For example, he writes, "The experience of worship in an institutional framework is something done to you, in front of you, or for you, but not by you."[10]

Ogden candidly states: "The church in general has adopted a leadership style that is at odds with an organism view."[11] He seeks to call attention to the model of ministry as initiated by Jesus. Ogden reminds his readers of Jesus' conversation with His disciples about leadership. He contrasts the Pharisee's model of ministry with the model of Jesus' ministry; one is a style to repudiate, the other is a style to emulate.[12] He writes,

> Jesus tells us, first, what servant leadership is not. Comparing the behavior he expected of his followers with the model of both gentile and Jewish leadership, Jesus describes the prevailing concept of greatness and then calls his disciples to walk away from the only model they had known. He calls them to be immersed in a radically different model he has lived out before them.[13]

"The Gentile leaders' style," writes Ogden, "is captured by the word 'over.'"[14] He points out that the word translated "lord it over" is almost always used in the New Testament in negative terms.[15] Kilpatrick, in his brilliant sketch of **Hebrew 13:7**, expresses the same concern about leaders who "lord it over" other Christians. In reality both men seek to undergird their ideas from Scripture, but both also approach the subject of leadership through the lens of certain theological principles set forth in the Scriptures. The amount of time and space taken here to review the beliefs of Kilpatrick, although considerable, is easily justifiable. The issues contested encapsulate the warp and woof of the continuing controversy within the Christian church. The traditions of the church made it difficult, if not almost impossible, to hear the word of God correctly. Kilpatrick aptly remarks:

> The King's [King James] insistence upon rendering the Greek word "hegeomai" as "RULE" IN Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24, and elsewhere. According

> to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, "hegeomai" means "to lead." To render verse 17 as "Obey those who have the rule over you. . ." is a complete mistranslation of two key words in this passage, obey and rule.

The word "obey" is from the Greek "peitho" and means "to persuade, win over, listen to; the obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion" (W.E. Vine). Since "hegeomai" means "to lead," the simple admonition of this passage is, "Consider the example of your leaders and imitate their faith." The RSV says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." NEB: "Obey your leaders and defer to them."

> The KJV renders verse 7 as, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." Paul said more correctly, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God" (RSV). Phillips renders it, "Never forget your leaders, who first spoke to you the Word of God." NEB: "Remember your leaders, those who first spoke God's message to you." Today's English Version: "Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you." What can we conclude except that the word "rule" is a gross mistranslation. Those who look to this passage as a prooftext for eldership "authority" will find no help whatever from the Greek text. It is even questionable that the passage refers to elders, since they are not mentioned. It more likely refers to the apostles or inspired evangelists who "first spoke to them the Word of God." Most of all, there is not the slightest hint of a ruling hierarchy contained in these verses.[16]

Another startling revelation, as stated by Ogden, is that "ministry is not confined to the church building":[17] He further says that Christians are now learning that the church is simply a "base of operations to support and equip people to live out their lives in Christian witness in the work environment."[18] Kilpatrick, too, is therefore on target when he says, "We must restudy the subject of worship so that we might take it out of the church building and put it back into everyday lives."[19] Again Kilpatrick writes: "Early Christians did not 'go to church' to worship. They were worshippers who came together to share with each other the things they had in common, namely their faith in Jesus Christ and the great hope of salvation."[20] Once more, Kilpatrick corners the very heart of Christian worship when he says, "We must 'wear' our religion daily instead of 'performing' it on Sunday morning inside a building. Each Christian is God's temple. Each Christian is God's priest. Worship is perpetual. However, we like the Jews, continue to practice our religion in an assembly."[21]

Ogden, like Kilpatrick, calls for a renewal of the biblical concept of ministry. Both men seek to reestablish the priesthood of all believers. Kilpatrick, as noted above, rejects the institutional structure of the church that is so prevalent among many Christians. Ogden and Kilpatrick advocate the "church as organism," not as an institutional, hierarchical organization with offices and officers. Again, Ogden writes, "We are in the midst of something as radical as a paradigm shift from the church as institution to the church as organism."[22] Ogden also points out, with justice, that "In the New Testament the church is described, among other things, as the household of God, the people of God, the bride of Christ, and a fellowship of the Holy Spirit."[23]

Fisher: The 21st Century Pastor

David Fisher's book on ***The 21st Century Pastor*** is more concerned with the role of the pastor in the local congregation than he is with a servant/leadership model of ministry. Fisher's clergy/laity model is the opposite of Ogden's servant/leadership model. Fisher's emphasis upon the authority of the pastor is a hangover from the Reformation movement inherited from Catholicism and the Church of England. He does not seem to completely capture the original concept of ministry postulated by Jesus. It is not wrong to ordain or appoint individuals to work with the church on a full time basis, but the problem is in elevating these individuals to officers, as in a corporation. Whether one is pastor or elder, no one has the right to exercise authority over another Christian.

There does appear to be tension throughout his book as to the proper role of pastor in his relationship to the church. For example, he writes, "I had been David Fisher for twenty-six years. Suddenly I was 'Reverend Fisher.' A new identity was laid on me, and I couldn't be just me anymore."[24] He laments the "triumph of individualism in America."[25] He observes: "America has created a church filled with people who refuse to let anyone tell them what to believe or do."[26] Fisher demonstrates most impressively his own role as pastor when he pungently states,

> Only those who open their hearts and souls to me and my ministry will grow from my ministry. Those who resist me or my pastoral authority not only tend to be unhappy, but they cut themselves off from the spiritual nourishment at the center of the church. One cannot be served well by someone to whom one will not open one's soul.[27]

There appears to be a stark contrast between Fisher and Kilpatrick in their perception of the preacher or pastor. Fisher places emphasis upon the authority of the pastor, whereas Kilpatrick emphasizes the eldership, as it is commonly called within the Churches of Christ. However, Kilpatrick seeks to undermine the traditional concept of authority assumed by many elders and preachers; for example, he writes in his editorial, "The Fear of Toleration," to bring attention to the usurpation of power exercised by some Christians over other Christians.[28] In this editorial, he calls attention to a lawsuit filed in November 1984, by a member of the Sixth & Izard Church of Christ. This suit (Brown vs. Gipson) was filed against the elders of this church. Some members of the congregation wanted to inspect the financial records of the church, but they were refused access to the books. The elders, as reported by Kilpatrick, "maintain that they have total authority over such matters and that members have no right to challenge the decision of the eldership."[29]

In order to reinforce the unequal position of the "ruling class," the elders of this congregation brought in Hardeman Nichols from the Preston Road School of Preaching (Texas) to deliver two messages on the "authority" of the elders. Kilpatrick writes: "According to him no charge could ever be brought against the elders because they had been invested with divine authority to carry out the will of God on earth."[30] Again he writes, '"The members,' says Nichols, 'are to <u>obey</u> the elders when they agree with them, and to <u>submit</u> to them when they don't agree!"'[31] Once more, Kilpatrick draws attention to this highhanded seizure of power:

It is still amazing to me how that our "elderships" can so easily ignore the

> words of Jesus who spoke against the very thing that preachers and elders now advocate. Jesus told his disciples that the Gentiles "lorded it over them" but that it would not be so among them. Our people seem bound and determined to prove Jesus wrong. They do indeed lord it over the congregation. They take comfort in the idea that "lording it over" has reference to a harsh, dictatorial rule and that this is what Jesus meant. A little investigation will show otherwise. An elder or group of elders who have a body of people under submission are "master," rulers over that body. To be the "master over" is to "lord over" and it doesn't matter whether the rule be harsh or lenient, or dictatorial or benevolent. In either case we have a man or a group of men acting in an "official" capacity over the household of God which God never intended.[32]

It does not appear from Fisher's writings that he would espouse an ultra authoritative position of power in the pastor. But, on the other hand, he is not clear as to the exact outlook he advocates. In spite of this lack of clarity on the part of Fisher, he still reveals, so it seems to this author, his concern over the importance of "pastoral authority." He further states, "Wise leaders distinguish carefully between the authority conferred by an office and the authority earned over time."[33] His use of the terms "Reverend Fisher,"[34] "pastoral authority,"[35] "authority conferred by an office,"[36] and "authority earned over time"[37] appear to contradict the servant/leadership role inaugurated by Jesus. For example, Matthew records seven woes enunciated against the Pharisees;[38] and, immediately Jesus censures their desire for preeminence. Jesus uses the following pregnant words to call attention to their self-righteous spirit:

> Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (**Matthew 23:5-11**).

Fisher, in spite of the negative criticism advanced by this author, still shares insightful information concerning the burden of responsibility on the part of the pastor. But this pastoral care, as advocated by Fisher, is associated with elders within the Churches of Christ rather than with the clergy. His chapter on "Jars of Clay: The Pastor's Burden" is well worth reading.[39] In fact, this chapter is one of the highlights of the book. One cannot find fault with his emphasis upon leadership as a gift from God. But this gift does not entitle one to exercise authority over other Christians.[40]

Carroll: As One with Authority

Carroll begins his book (chapter 1) with the demise of authority among pastors. He recalls the colonial period in which the sermons were the only voice of authority that the congregations were pledged to obey.[41] He recalls the first time he encountered a confrontation to his authority. This challenge resulted over the "racial justice issues" in

which he received criticism for his preaching about these controversial concerns and his public involvement.[42] He also laments the challenge to his authority that occurred in a "setting whose epistemological assumptions" radically differed with his.[43] One can sympathize with his feelings, but the authority of his beliefs should rest not upon Carroll's authority, but upon God's authority.[44]

He puts forth three well-known views of Max Webber on which authority is asserted within group leadership: (1) authority exercised on traditional grounds, (2) authority resting on charismatic grounds of the individual, and (3) authority based on rational-legal grounds inherent in the one elevated to authority to issue commands.[45] But Fisher seeks to redefine these three sources of authority as (1) ultimate authority, and (2) penultimate authority. For Fisher, ultimate authority is based on experiences and convictions on which authority is based; on the other hand, penultimate authority, according to Fisher, deals with the legitimate exercise of power in a group.[46]

Ultimate authority is the concept of the leader exercising authority to lead that is granted to him through the "group's core values and beliefs and contribute to their realization."[47] Ultimately, this authority is granted to the leader based on the belief that the traditions of the church are based upon the "church's tradition(s)—and to those who interpret them—because they believe, in last analysis, that these authorities are grounded in God and God's purposes for the world."[48]

Penultimate authority is "contributed historically to the authority of religious leaders."[49] In other words, this authority is handed down "as a member of a priestly caste, the possession of unique physical or psychic attributes, special knowledge of a sacred tradition, charisma and exemplary sanctity, or various kinds of expertise."[50]

Carroll seeks to contrast the Catholic model of ministry with the Protestant model of ministry.[51] He calls attention to the "sacramental person" (Catholic concept) as one that bears the sacred in the midst of life. On the other hand, the Protestant view of ministry is essentially the same. Protestant churches continue to give greater authority to the so-called personal or inward call of the clergy as a sacramental or representative role.[52] Carroll captures very clearly the nineteenth century mindset of the evangelical Protestants in their disagreeing with the sacramental aspects of ministry, but, on the other hand, he clearly develops the Protestant view of clergy as having a special relationship to God.[53] The ultimate conclusion is that "both catholic and evangelical perspective agrees that the ordained person has a special relationship to God and is God's representative. There is a conviction that she or he is an instrument through which Christ is at work."[54]

Again, one sees tension in Carroll's strong leadership and symmetrical authority. He writes, "The secret of exercising power is not to hoard one's power or use it paternalistically but to learn together to honor each other's gifts and use one's own gift to strengthen and support the other."[55] Carroll challenges clergy "to exercise their leadership authority so that individuals and congregations are helped to respond in ways that are Christianly apt."[56]

CONCLUSION

Both Kilpatrick and Ogden seek to reinstate the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers. These two men labor to rid the church of a priesthood within a priesthood. A perusal of Fisher's book reveals that the modern church has substituted the *clergy* for the *priest* of the Reformation. Kilpatrick calls attention to the current concept of authority as exercised by some elders within the Churches of Christ. Many elders within the Churches of Christ have assumed the role of "pope" within their own congregations. In other words, to differ with the elders is to disagree with God Himself. When they speak it is *ex cathedra.*

On the other hand, Fisher and Carroll espouse the more traditional view of the clergy—a view formally maintained before, during, and after the Reformation. The modern church has exchanged the clergy for the priest with its continuing role of authority. It is not uncommon for the clergy in some denominations to run the local congregation with an iron fist. What the pastor says is final—no recourse. Even though Fisher and Carroll have many helpful insights in their books; nevertheless, these men have not grasped, so it seems to me, the proper role of the pastor in their relationship to other Christians.

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[1] See "Part 1" for a more detailed review of Kilpatrick's view on leadership.

[2] Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 11-26.

[3] Ibid. 11, quoted in Lewis W. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 54.

[4] Ibid. 12.

[5] Ibid.

[6] R. L. Kilpatrick, "Restructuring the Church," in *Ensign* IX, no 10 (February 1982), 200.

[7] Ogden, *Reformation*, 19.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 21.

[10] Ibid., 24

[11] Ibid., 169.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid. On the other hand, there does appear to be tension between the above statements on leadership and his interpretation of 1Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 3:5, Romans 12:8, and Hebrews 13:17 (see pp. 148-151). It appears, so it seems to this author, that he has not properly translated these verses correctly in light of Matthew 20:20-28. For a detailed study of these Scriptures, see "An Analysis of Hebrews 13:17" by Dallas Burdette, paper submitted to Dr. Rex Turner Sr., in partial fulfillment of course requirements in Hebrews (NT 4319A) 1993 Spring Quarter, August 12, 1993.

[16] Kilpatrick, "The Continuing Influence of King James," Ensign XV, no. 7 (August 1986). 137.

[17] Ogden, *Reformation* 21.

[18] Ibid.

[19] R. L. Kilpatrick, "Restructuring the Church," 189.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid. 191.

[22] Ogden, *Reformation,* 29.

[23] Ibid.

[24] David Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 20.

[25] Ibid. 232. One might observe that this kind of attitude was responsible for persecution against Christians in Catholicism and Protestantism

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 233.

[28] R. L. Kilpatrick, "The Fear of Toleration," in *Ensign* XIV, no. 1 (January 1986), 2, 17-20.

[29] Ibid. 18.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid. 18-19. See also R. L. Kilpatrick, "Concerning 'Authority,'" in *Ensign* XIV, no. 8 (September 1986): 142, where he says,

Words such as ekklesia (church), presbuteros (elder), episkopos (Bishop), hegeomai (rule), and others, were in ancient times common, everyday household words which since then have been given a technical meaning that was never intended – and some just plain mistranslated (ekklesia – church). We have made Greek adjectives (older) English nouns (Elders). We have taken functional words (overseers) and made them titles of positions (Bishops). We have made "office" a place where "officials" preside over the congregation, when actually the word means nothing more than "function" or "work." We have ordained certain ones to "rule" over us, just like the Israelites who appointed themselves a king to rule over them, contrary to the approval of God.

[33] Fisher, *21st Century Pastor, 233.*

[34] Ibid., 20.

[35] Ibid., 233.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Matthew chapter 23.

[39] Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor*, 114-140.

[40] Since this author has not talked with Fisher, perhaps it is best to assign another meaning to the word authority than is commonly employed. Fisher does not sufficiently define his term to inform the reader as to the exact connotation he wishes to attach to the word authority.

[41] Jackson W. Carroll, *As One With Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox press, 1991), 14.

[42] Ibid. 14.

[43] Ibid. 15.

[44] Carroll's first chapter is a section about the demise of his authority in the congregation. It appears, so it seems to this author, that he did not adequately prepare his listeners for the source of all authority, namely, Jesus the Christ. Yet, Carroll does offer some tremendous insights into the true nature of ministry, and the true nature of the church.

[45] Carroll, *Authority*, 40-41.

[46] Ibid. 41-43.

[47] Ibid. 43

[48] Ibid. 43.

[49] Ibid. 44-50.

[50] Ibid. 45.

[51] Ibid. 46-47.

[52] Ibid. 47.

[53] Ibid. 47.

[54] Ibid. 48.

[55] Ibid. 95.

[56] Ibid. 120.

Obey Them That Have the Rule Over You?

IMPORTANCE NOTICE:

If you wish to read the Greek and Hebrew characters employed in this essay, you must download (free) the Greek and Hebrew fonts listed on my home page.

Thrust statement: **Elders are to lead, not dictate.**

Scripture reading: **Hebrews 13:17**.

INTRODUCTION

> Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (**Hebrews 13:17**).[1]

This essay seeks to explore the role of leaders within the Christian community of the Churches of Christ. In this investigation, the objective is to analyze the function of power seized by many leaders/elders/preachers/editors within the Churches of Christ and also to look into the key Scriptures cited by the select few for their justification of dictatorial powers. There is a positive side of leadership as well as a negative side. This paper seeks to look at both sides from a biblical perspective. On the downbeat trait, the person in charge is dictatorial; on the upbeat quality, the guide is a model to be imitated in his/her daily walk with God. On the negative side, the leader is viewed as ruler, boss, director, executive, manager, chief, and master. However, on the positive side, the leader is viewed as guide, advisor, beacon, counselor, teacher, lighthouse, and guidepost.

LEADERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Dictatorial Leadership

The question that confronts many sincere Christians is: Is biblical submission blind obedience to whatever the leaders believe the Bible teaches? Or does biblical surrender to the leaders negate allegiance to Christ in every facet of one's life? Can the leaders stand in judgment for another's actions? Or does each person give an account to God for his/her own dealings? Are there any infallible interpreters in the Churches of Christ? These are questions that everyone must deal with in his/her own life. Is your faith in the leaders? Or is your faith in God? Which? Are leaders infallible interpreters of God's Word? Are Christians responsible to God for their actions? Are Christians to blindly follow whatever the leaders tell them to do or believe?

Has God authorized high-ranking individuals to occupy a tyrannical position within the Christian community? It is not uncommon for elders, within the Churches of Christ, to hire or dismiss preachers without the consent of the congregation. Once they make the decision, then that judgment is final—no recourse, case closed. Can elders appoint other elders without the consent of the congregation? This scenario happened recently in a congregation in Birmingham, AL. As a result of high-handedness, the body of Christ split. Has God endorsed a select few to exercise lordship over the consciences of other believers? Are believers to unscrew their heads and let a certain group of men behave as a board of directors? When the board of administrators interprets Scripture, should one accept their views as *ex cathedra*? Is it sinful for one to disagree with the chosen shepherds and still remain within the fellowship of God's people, that is to say, the local congregation? Does God require blind conformity? Is one to be fully persuaded according to the thinking of the elders/preachers/evangelist,

regardless as to what they teach? Or should Christians exercise some judgment in keeping with their own minds? Do the Scriptures teach a sort of sightless submission?[2]

The positive aspects of leadership promote responsible direction in order to encourage others to put forward a life dedicated to holy living. There is a need for older men to give guidance in the way of devoutness (see **Hebrews 13:1-17**). Leaders need to encourage Christians through their trials and tribulations. The church needs godly men to train other Christians to become soldiers for Jesus Christ in the conversion of the world.

Congregational Leadership

This composition is not written to castigate holy men in their roles as servants of Christ nor is this essay written to deny that congregations need leadership. Rather this paper is concerned with "power religion." Power religion is the same thing as exercising lordship over God's children. Lording it over people is spiritual abuse. Peter warns leaders not to engage in such high-handed tactics:

> To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording (katakurieuvonte", *katakurieuontes*) it over those entrusted to you, but being examples (tuvpoi, *tupoi*) to the flock (**1 Peter 5:1-3**).

Peter wants the elders to be models or patterns to the flock, not individuals who lord it over the ones entrusted to them. Since there is a trend among some leaders that Christians are to give blind obedience to whatever they teach, then this issue of the proper role of leadership must be dealt with. Some leaders assume the role of Pope in their relationship to the people. It is wrong for leaders to bind their interpretations upon other Christians.[3] The philosophy of "individual non-responsibility" advanced by many leaders is unbiblical. Leaders are not infallible interpreters. Every person should search the Scriptures for himself/herself and draw his/her own conclusions based upon the context (See **Romans 14:1—15:7**).

Paul sets an example of this kind of reasoning in his letter to the Christians at Rome and Corinth. There were many differences over doctrinal matters within the congregation at Rome. Some of the believers were correct in their interpretation of the issues discussed in **Romans 14** and some were wrong. But both were wrong when they tried to impose their views upon other believers. Thus, Paul dealt with diversity of opinions this way:

> Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The

> man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (**Romans 14:1-4**).

Paul did not say that the shepherds were to enforce the correct interpretation dealing with "disputable matters." The person with deficiency in understanding is still acceptable to God. Paul says "no" to judging: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" (**14:4**). But is that all Paul says about this issue of unity in diversity? Again, the answer is "no." Listen once more to Paul as he speaks of the standing of individuals with imperfection in their knowledge: "To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (**14:4**). Some of the Christians wanted to force their own views in these matters of differences, but again Paul says, "no": "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (**Romans 14:5**). He concludes his discussion about diversity this way: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (**15:7**). Has God accepted you with imperfection in your life? Has God accepted you with imperfection in your understanding? If so, then Paul says that believers should "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

Not only did Paul deal with unity in diversity with the church at Rome, but he also had to address this issue of how Christians should react when some defect in knowledge is quite apparent to the know-it-alls. He begins his treatise on the sacrificing of foods to idols: "Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge" (**1 Corinthians 8:1**). In other words, it is true that some understood the issues very clearly while others did not comprehend. Paul admits this up front. But he does not drop the ball with that statement. He goes on to say: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (**8:1**). It is not uncommon for Christians who think they know everything to manifest an attitude of aloofness toward those whose knowledge does not measure up to theirs. Paul goes right to the heart of this problem: "Knowledge puffs up." For Paul, if one loves others in spite of differences, then, this condescension is the outcome of love—"love builds up."

Paul nips this know-it-all-attitude in the bud. He writes: "The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know" (**8:2**). Christians are in a state of growth. But Paul does not want Corinthians to make a test of fellowship out of spiritual digestion. What does matter is the state of the heart. Again, Paul points out that that which is acceptable to God is love for God: "But the man who loves God is known by God" (**8:2**). One may be deficient in knowledge but, at the same time, if one loves God, then, this individual is the one to whom God extends His love.[4]

If there were elders in the congregation at Corinth, they were not advised to take a negative action against the weak but rather to love them.

Paul later wrote Titus on the procedures to follow if a person became divisive: "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned" (**Titus 3:10-11**). This warning would apply to any of God's children—leaders or lay people. If one is not willing to follow the counsel of Paul to the Romans and the Corinthians, then Paul says that one should have nothing to do with the disruptive person—none are excluded, which includes elders, preachers, and editors of Christian journals. The so-called ruling class does not frequently heed this warning; they themselves become very troublesome when they do not get their way. They themselves are frequently divisive. Unseeing submission on the part of the congregation discourages personal accountability to God; this sightless resignation is not a mark of true Christian maturity. Raymond Brown is perfectly right when he insists, "The Christian is answerable to Christ alone."[5]

CONTROVERSY AND MISUNDERSTANDING

OF BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

Much of the controversy and misunderstanding concerning the proper role leaders play within the local body of believers revolves around an interpretation of **Hebrews 13:17**: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority." Many well-meaning leaders to substantiate their dictatorial leadership with the Churches of Christ, as well as of many other Christian ecclesiastical structures, quote this passage. Many godly men cite this Scripture with almost literal crudeness. Certain Scriptures, on first reading, appear to uphold the position many leaders advance within the local congregation. But before one offers an interpretation, one should consult the context. One goal of any interpreter should be to ascertain what the original writer sought to communicate through his use of words.

The arguments that are usually advanced to maintain lordship over the congregation are so fragile that one is reluctant to let too much credence rest upon them. Nevertheless, because of current arguments advanced by a few, this subject of authority exercised by a small number of leaders must be dealt with. Part of the problem today is that the traditions of the church sometimes make it difficult, is not impossible, to read the Bible without "glasses." Truth is too often the projection of the particular views and interests of the powerful. The powerful, often times, have difficulty in hearing God accurately. The "faith of the fathers" becomes the watchword of orthodoxy. Without intending to, "we bring our theological heritage, our ecclesiastical traditions, our cultural norms, or our existential concerns to the Epistles as we read them."[6] The words of Jesus should ring loud and clear: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (**Revelation 3:6**).[7]

In seeking an answer to the phrase, "Obey them that have the rule over you" (**Hebrews 13:17**, KJV),[8] every interpreter must initially pursue the meaning intended for the original audience. Too often Christians find

things in biblical narratives that are not really there (eisegesis); they read *into* the Bible their own notions rather than read *out of* (exegesis) the Bible what God wants them to know. Christians should not be "monkey-see-monkey-do" readers of Holy Scripture. God's words are to be found in the intent of His Revelation, not man's interpretation of His Word.

Since words operate within a context and receive meaning from that context, then an exegete (interpreter) must recognize that words can change from situation to situation. Words do not automatically have meaning; they receive meaning from their author. To make the text say something that the author did not propose is to abuse the text. The message of the passage cannot be properly interpreted in isolation from the historical context. As a result of misreading the text, it is not uncommon for leaders to labor under the impression that God has given them authority over other Christians. Their voices are equated with the Word of God. Their interpretations are identified with Scripture. No one is allowed to be "fully convinced in his own mind" (**Romans 14:5**). But the evidence does not support the traditional attitude and position maintained by many elders. It is imperative that Christians learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to them through the years.

Ultimatums of Conformity Issued

By Many Religious Leaders

It is not exceptional for leaders (elders and preachers) to issue an ultimatum to other Christians who do not concur with their particular brand of orthodoxy to either shape up or ship out. The rule of thumb is: one must submit, never question. One is not allowed to disagree with the so-called leadership and still remain within the fellowship of the local community. In order to justify such ungodly behavior by the leaders, the nonconformist (one that thinks for himself/herself) is often referred to as "not sound in the faith."

This mind-set is especially true within the various factions that exist within the Churches of Christ (at least twenty-five or more divisions). One's acceptability depends on the position that one maintains concerning the following issues: one's understandings about divorce and remarriage, instrumental music in the so-called worship service, the use of the Sunday school versus the non-Sunday school position, individual communion cups versus the one-cup practice, the Scripturalness of Bible colleges, the support of orphan homes, views on the return of Christ (premillennial), handclapping in the assembly, solo singing in the assembly, and so on. Christians are not allowed freedom to decide for themselves; the beliefs espoused by certain individuals must coincide with partisan leadership.

The subject of divorce and remarriage has wrought havoc within the body of Christ. If one divorces without the approval of leadership, then warnings are issued concerning their marital status. In other words, the eldership can issue an ultimatum—divorce and remain celibate or face dire

consequences—ostracism. The leadership determines whether one should remain single, or if remarried, whether one can remain married. Whatever leadership decides, the people must obey without question. For one not to obey the elders is tantamount to not obeying God. No one is allowed to disagree with the "chosen few" without incurring the wrath of God, at least according to the leaders. The dictatorial powers are not limited just to this one issue—divorce and remarriage—but it can be applied to any position that the leadership decides upon.

Sightless Conformity Demanded

By Some Leaders

A host of Christian leaders today teach sightless conformity to their biblical interpretations. The kind of concord demanded by many church leaders—elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals—is not the same intent of the author of Hebrews. many church leaders today—not all—have the concept of compliance that demands conformity and resignation to party orthodoxy. The battle cry is: submit or be kicked out of the synagogue. This attitude is the same mindset of the religious leaders in Jesus' day. As a result of the misuse of the Greek text, recent scholarship has focused on this issue of "obey" and its semantic[9] meaning. According to Owen L. Crouch, the "verb means 'persuade.' When you persuade yourself you obey. . . . They are not dictators over your spirits but are 'leaders' for your lives."[10] Another scholar, Philip Hughes, is perfectly right when he insists: "The authority our author is commending must not be confused with authoritarianism."[11] It is in this same vein that Leon Morris draws attention to the fact that "authority" is not a part of the Greek text. For instance, he writes:

> The readers are to be obedient to their leaders. In v. 7 the leaders were men who had died. Here, however, those alive and currently in places of authority are meant (At the same time we should perhaps notice that there is nothing in the Gr. to correspond to NIV's 'their authority').[12]

Thus, Schuyler English, too, explains: "It is self-evident, or should be, that such obedience will not be in the form of blind and unqualified compliance with the whims of self-appointed authority."[13] Why did the author of **Hebrews** write **verses 7** and **17** in **chapter 13**? Just a casual glance of the Book as a whole seems to convey the author's appeal to the believers who had previously responded to the good news of God not to return to legalism, that is, Judaism. The new covenant demands, even as the old covenant, high moral standards, but at the same time, the new covenant does not involve Mosaic rituals, holy days, and formalities. In other words, the new covenant with God through Jesus Christ is internal, not external ritualism of animal sacrifices. He draws attention to the crucifixion of Jesus, but, in doing this, he cautions them about the possibility of crucifying the Son of God afresh by returning to Judaism.

He wants the Hebrews to continue to trust in Jesus as God's atonement for the sins of humanity. Not only does he want these believers to turn to Him for salvation, but he also wants them to lay aside every sin that causes one to stumble so easily. This faithfulness to Jesus is what **verses 7** and **17** are all about in **chapter 13** of **Hebrews**. Listen once more to the author of Hebrews:

> Keep on loving each other as brothers. [2] Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. [3] Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. [4] Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. [5] Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." [6] So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" [7] Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. [8] Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. [9] Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. [10] We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. [11] The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. [12] And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. [13] Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. [14] For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. [15] Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. [16] And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. [17] Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (**Hebrews 13:1-17**).

Letter to Dallas Burdette from Abused Preacher

This author recently received (December 23, 2001) a letter from a brother who has suffered tremendously from abusive power exerted by the powerful. I am withholding this brother's name in order to protect him, as much as possible, from the powers that be. As one reads his letter, one can sympathize with the abuse he has received from individuals who have mistreated him—all in the name of faithfulness to the Word of God. Listen

to this brother as he describes his encounter within the Churches of Christ. He writes about his pilgrimage of faith as he left the Baptist movement to work among the Churches of Christ:

> Dear Brother Dallas:
> First, I want to sincerely apologize for my apparent poor demeanor in my E-Mails to you. I ask that you forgive me of this wrong! Permit me to briefly explain that I came amongst the churches of Christ meek, humble, rejoicing & happy. In a matter of a few short months I had been torn to shreds, me & my wife & family. The radical "anti's" looked at every corner for anything of disagreement they could find to beat me with. I endured it for a time, confusedly. Yet, after a while I figured I had to take up for myself & defend myself. This has been a constant fight for me now for over 3 years. As you know, & as you stated in one of your E-Mails, if one does not line up & agree with them on EVERY single point then one is a false teacher & open game. They totally refuse a personal thinker & do everything in their power to gang up & kill him! I'm sure you know exactly what I am talking about. My growing up in a religion that held the Ministry in high esteem & reverence into the Church of Christ who are the total opposite was a tremendous shock, to say the least! This is what led to the writing of my book. I am a child of God that has been beat up on so much that I have so much anger & hostility in my heart for church of Christ people. I am a Preacher walking around with a chip on his shoulder ready at any time to fight, as I have been made to react. I am sorry that I have become this way. It's like if a father or mother literally beats their child it will turn out to beat others as well because that's how they have had to learn to react. I am not the man I use to be prior to entering the Church of Christ denomination. I don't know if I'll rebound back from it! It appears that the "knee-jerk reaction" I spoke to you about just happens to be me! I ask for your forgiveness in Christ Jesus.
> I totally enjoy your writings. You work very hard & I am proud to have them in my library. Thank you so much. Brother Dallas, I want to go to heaven, I want to love the Lord & His people. I want to serve Him & them all the days of my life. Yet, I must somehow work through this bitterness. I ask for your humble prayers on this behalf. Dallas, behind all this bitterness, hatred, evil, & paranoia is a kind-hearted child of Christ who loves Him with all his heart.
> My God truly & richly bless you & yours with happiness & long life in His service.

DALLAS BURDETTE VERSUS ELDERSHIP

Membership in Local Congregation

As one reflects back on the KJV rendering of **Hebrews 13:17**, one is confronted with the words: "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give

account." Many Christian leaders read this verse with wooden literalness. Several years ago, this author (Dallas Burdette) sought to place membership with one of the local congregations in Montgomery, AL. This particular fellowship of believers was associated with the Stone/Campbell Movement of the nineteen-century. This group identified itself as a Church of Christ. Once I had made known my desire to place membership and work within this congregation, the elders informed me that they would need to meet with me before they could give their consent. I agreed to this meeting, but they informed me that this would have to be done on a Wednesday evening during the congregation's regular Bible study groups. They refused to come to my home or allow me to meet with them in their homes. This meeting, since it occurred on Wednesday evening, only lasted for about thirty minutes.

I finally agreed to meet with this board of directors—commonly called eldership—to discuss my becoming a member of this local congregation. After going to the office of the pulpit minister, we all set around a conference table. Then, the meeting began like this: "We understand that you have a problem with obeying them that have the rule over you." Ultimately, they wanted to exercise mind control over me. I was informed that they would accept me on certain conditions. The conditions were: (1) You cannot invite members of this congregation into your home if you have certain individuals visiting you, namely, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett; and (2) You can never give any religious journal or book to any member of this congregation without our approval.

I found this extremely interesting, especially the one about not giving books to anyone without the permission of the "ruling elders." One of the "ruling elders" owned one of the largest Christian bookstores in the South. He could sell the books, but I could not give them away without his permission. This group wanted to place a "gag order" on my writings or the writings of other men. This group of elders practiced mind control, which is totally unbiblical. These leaders sought to coerce me into accepting their views as infallible, even though some later changed their views on the divorce and remarriage issues that they adamantly argued against me at the time. My views, at the time, were also a bone of contention with these men. Later (several years later), one of the elders who fought my membership in the congregation changed his views concerning the divorce and remarriage controversy. He requested that I write a paper on this subject, which I did. [14]

Mind Control Sought By Elders

Another encounter occurred several years earlier than the aforementioned encounter with the board of directors. In this congregation, I expressed some views, while teaching a Bible class, on the marriage and divorce debate that did not coincide with the "ruling class." One of the elders came to me and informed me: "You are never to tell anyone anything in this congregation that disagrees with what the elders have said." Once more, one is confronted with the "obey them that have the rule over you."

This is the same congregation that called in a preacher from Atlanta, GA to get the congregation back on track—in spite of the fact that many members objected. After his arrival, he and the elders, one evening, raided the library and confiscated all of the books that I had donated to the Church, which had been previously approved by the same elders. These books were then placed under lock-and-key. The members were not allowed to read them. One of the deacons found out that I picked up my books, but he was never told that, prior to my asking for my books back, the leadership impounded the books to protect its members. Again, one witnesses the cult mentality of mind control on the part of leadership.[15]

DALLAS BURDETTE VERSUS CHRISTIANITY UNIVERSITY

Essays Banned

Mind control is the major key to keeping its membership under control. One of the major Christian universities in Montgomery, AL also plays the identical mind control game that elders, preachers, and editors of religious journal exercise—agree or face excommunication or refusal to allow one on the faculty. The President of this particular university issued an executive order that my essays could no longer be required reading by the professors. Prior to this executive order, many of my essays were required reading. After my papers were placed on the prohibited list, I was not even allowed to photocopy papers—not even essays written by others—for the professors. This same Christian refused to allow me on the faculty because I would not write a paper condemning instrumental music.[16] Is this brother sincere? I suspect that he is. He, like so many of us, allows traditions to mold one's thinking. These leaders place themselves, not self-consciously, on a level with God. For one to disagree with leadership, then this is the same as disagreeing with God.

Letter from Bill Smith (An Elder)

In spite of the Matthean account of Jesus' rebuke of superiority among the disciples, nevertheless, Christians still cite **Hebrews 13:7**, **17**, and **24** to substantiate dictatorial, magisterial, authoritarian, totalitarian, and domineering obedience in the absolute. One is still confronted by the demand of some leaders (elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals) to demand blind obedience to group leaders. Having said this, this statement is not a blanket castigation of all religious leaders. This author (Dallas Burdette) received an email (December 25, 2001) from an elder (Bill Smith, Jr.), who is one of the leaders in a congregation in Louisiana. He writes:

> Dallas, as you do your paper on "authority" and Hebrews 13:17, you can quote this elder as saying no mere human has authority over another Christian. As an elder, I have inordinate influence, but I have no raw authority to command anyone! Most men who want to argue authority do so because they have little or no influence among God's people that allows them to lead. Therefore, they want to command. Of course, they do consider

> themselves to be benefactors for the peoples good, don't they? This authority thing in my opinion is another of those hangovers from Catholicism. It grieves me that men want to rule rather than serve. This after Jesus made it so clear that his disciple were not to function as the world's rulers. Do a good job on your paper. Our fellowship really needs to reinvestigate Christian leadership.[17]

HEBREWS 13:17 EMPLOYED BY MANY LEADERS

TO ENFORCE CONFORMITY TO ORTHODOXY

OF ITS PARTICULAR FACTION

As stated above, the Scripture that is cited to uphold the traditional position of the authority of elders (leadership) within the Churches of Christ is **Hebrews 13:17**. Many Christians read this Scripture and automatically identify this passage as authority for insisting that the elders are to be obeyed *in toto* (completely, fully, entirely, utterly). When one reads this verse without spectacles, one is immediately confronted with the awareness that this Scripture does not mention the word *elders*. In fact, the word that the Hebrews author employs is the word *leaders* (ηΣγουμεψνοϊ, &hgoumenois, "to lead," "leading ones"). Even though leaders may include elders, nevertheless, this text does not indicate who the leaders were.

When one interprets **Hebrews 13:17** to teach that Christians must blindly "obey the elders," then this kind of reading reads too much into the words of this text. Within many segments of the Restoration Movement, this Scripture has lead to the crystallization of error concerning the role of leaders within the body of Christ. Raymond Brown draws attention to the negative interpretation foisted upon this passage:

> The writer is not inculcating blind, unthinking obedience to everything a Christian teacher says, otherwise there would be little point in issuing the warning he has just given about 'diverse and strange' doctrines. In the New Testament there is clear recognition that discernment is obviously necessary and also that obedience to the revealed word of God is essential.[18]

King James Version: Creation of Much Confusion

Some of the confusion exists as a result of the King James Version. The word and phrase that contribute to the confusion are: "obey," and "rule over you." The English word *obey* is the translation of πειψθω (peiqw), and the words *rule over you* originate from the Greek word ηΣγουψμενö (&goumenos). This essay will explore the use of these two Greek words in order to ascertain the true intent of the author. It appears, so it seems to this author (Dallas Burdette), that the words *obey* (even though a correct translation) and *rule over you* are too strong and, thus, do not convey accurately the nuance intended by the author. The traditional emphasis upon the word *obey* contradicts other plain teachings as expounded by Jesus to

His disciples. Also, the English phrase "rule over you" does not carry the sense contemplated by the originator of this Epistle.

The English translation seems to infer a hierarchy within the church, that is to say, a pyramid structure with laity at the bottom and various levels of leadership going to the top of the pyramid. Does the Greek text substantiate this kind of interpretation upon πειψθω (peiqw, "persuade") and ηςγεψομαι, (&hgeomai, "to lead)? As stated above, Matthew records a conversation between Jesus and His disciples about leadership. The disciples were arguing about positions of power. To this Jesus responds by saying:

> 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (**Matthew 20:25-28**).

The word *rulers* is from the Greek word α[ρχοντë (archontes, which is from α[ρχων, arcwn, "ruler" or "chief"). Then the words "lord it over" are from the Greek word κατακυριευψουσιν (katakurieusousin, which is from κατακυριευψω, katakurieuw, "to exercise dominion over"). And finally, the words "exercise authority over" are from the Greek word κατεξουσιαψζουσιν (katexousizousin, which is from κατεξουσιαψζω, katexousiazw, "to exercise authority over"). These words employed by Jesus in His conversation stands in stark contrast to what the author of Hebrews is reputed to have written. The author of Hebrews did not use α[ρχων, arcwn, "ruler" or "chief," or κατακυριευψω, katakurieuw, "to exercise dominion over," but rather he uses the word ηΣγεψομαι (&geomai, "to lead"). The Greek text in **Hebrews 13:17** does not substantiate the prevailing error ("rule over you") advanced by many elders and preachers within the Churches of Christ. In fact, the general interpretation contradicts what Jesus says in **Matthew 20:25-28**.

Before advancing into an analysis of **Hebrews 13:17**, one's attention is called to another Scripture that is relied upon to uphold the so-called "authority" of the elders. Paul's statement in **1 Timothy 5:17** is also utilized by many sincere Christians to maintain the status quo of the Churches of Christ. Paul writes: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (KJV). The NIV translates: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." The Greek word προεστω'τë (proestwtes, which is from προι; στημι, proisthmi, "to manage," "to direct"). *The Message* translation translates this way: "Give a bonus to leaders who do a good job, especially the ones who work hard at preaching and teaching."[19]

King James and the Divine Right of Kings

The divine right of Kings, as maintained by King James, rings loud and clear in the translation of Holy Scripture.[20] King James wanted his subjects to "obey" him and his appointed bishops. It appears that the KJV has not seized upon the shade of meaning intended by Paul. The Greek word proisthmi may be translated as "direct" or "manage," which communicates the idea of "to lead" or "to care for," not "to rule." The context of **First Timothy** does not exhibit the concept of the ruler and the ruled. This word will be dealt with more fully later in this essay. It is also worthy of note that Paul in his second epistle to Corinth addresses this very issue of "lording it over" God's children: "Not that we lord it over (κυριευψομεν kurieuomen) your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm" (**2 Corinthians 1:24**). But for the time being, it is necessary to draw attention to a more exhaustive study of the English words *obey*, and *rule over you*.

King James and the Cult of the Bishops

As one peruses the King James' rendering of these Scriptures in Hebrews, it appears, at least it seems this way to this author, to be a deliberate attempt by those who were in power (King James [1603-1625] and his bishops) to strengthen their hold on usurped authority, an authority traced all the way back to Henry the Eighth (1509-1547)—the divine right of Kings. According to the author of Hebrews, the "ones leading you" were not to be tyrannical in their leadership, but they were to assume the role of servants. In other words, it is not "sightless" allegiance that is spoken of in **Hebrews 13:7**, **17**, and **24**, but rather submission to the principles of holiness as exemplified in the lives of the leaders.

Regrettably, the translators of the King James Version did not capture the mood of the Greek text precisely. If the author of Hebrews wished to communicate the proposal of "rulership," he could have employed other words to transmit this impression. As stated earlier, the Greek word for "lord it over" is noticeably not present. The current translation of the KJV translation of **Hebrews 13:7**, **17**, and **24** appears to be the attitude of the translators. It is in this vein that Gustavus Paine cogently captures the essence of the "cult of the bishops" mentality, when he writes: "Given the times and the number of bishops among the learned men, the new Bible was certain to sustain the cult of bishops wherever the chance arose."[21]

TRADITION AND THE INTERPRETATION

OF HEBREWS 13:17

From **Hebrews 13:17**, many leaders find authority for their dictatorial powers. But does this verse uphold the kind of tyranny that is found throughout the Churches of Christ as a whole? Why do leaders advance this erroneous view? There is just one answer—tradition. This section of this essay seeks to analyze the phrase—"rule over you" in its biblical setting in order to help godly leaders come to a more balanced and correct view of their positions as shepherds. As stated above, the KJV

renders the Greek word ηΣγουμεψνοϊ Jhgoumenois ("leading ones") as "rule over you." It is significant that the author of Hebrews did not employ the noun εξξουσιψα exousia ("authority"), the noun α[ρχων arcwn ("ruler"), the verb α[ρχω arcw ("rule"), the verb κατακυριευψω katakurieuw ("lord it over"), nor the verb κατεξουσιαψζω katexousiazw ("exercise authority over"). These words are conspicuously absent in **Hebrews 13:17**. The word Jhgoumenois is from the Greek word ηΣγεψομαι jJegeomai, which means "to lead" or "to guide."

Unswerving Allegiance to Leaders

Countless leaders still demand unswerving allegiance to their dictates; on the other hand, scores of the so-called select few are not stressing obedience to the truth of the Gospel; that is to say, Jesus as God's way of salvation. But rather, they are trying to force their understanding of doctrinal issues upon unsuspecting members who are not allowed to think for themselves. Christians are compelled to see everything through the distorted lens of interpretation foisted upon the congregation by its leaders. One almost detects a Jim Jones' type of mentality—absolute control over the lives and minds of God's people. Christian leaders frequently manipulate, unconsciously, the text to support blind obedience to their dictates in order to uphold their brand of orthodoxy. There is an utter suppression of freedom. The demands are total submission of one's conscious and surrender of one's soul. This Lilliputian lunacy flourishes unchecked and is transmitted to the next generation.

There are over twenty-five divisions within the denominational Church of Christ, each claiming to be the "true" church. In each of these various splinter groups, one finds elders or leaders seeking to enforce their brand of orthodoxy upon the members of the local congregation with threat of castigation if they fail "to obey" them that have the "rule over them." No one denies that one should obey the teachings of the leaders concerning ethical behavior and Jesus as God's way of salvation. Elders or leaders in each splinter group want to enforce conformity to their odd interpretation of certain Scriptures that they frequently take out of context.

At the moment, numerous leaders advance the notion that it is sinful to employ musical instruments in praise to God, to use multiple cups in the distribution of the Lord's Supper, to use wine in the Lord's Supper, to break the bread or to pinch the bread, to participate in Sunday school, to have a kitchen in the church building (even though these same groups have toilets in their buildings), to take money out of the common treasure to purchase goods for those that are not Christians, and so on. Now, which board of directors should one obey? Each distinct fellowship has its own presuppositions, and when an individual ceases to conform to the dictates of the rulers, then this member is castigated under the charge that he/she did not "obey them that have the rule over you."

Again, the question is: Are Christians to render "blind" obedience to a board of elders—men who can hire or fire preachers without even

consulting the members. Leaders frequently control the finances of the church without any input from its members. It is not uncommon for leaders to exercise an iron fist in its policies. Is this what the author of Hebrews is referring to? Or, is he referring to obedience in reference to clinging to Christ and to holy living? An analysis of the words employed by the author will help to bring one into the consciousness and intention of the writer. As one seeks to understand **Hebrews 13:17**, one must be conscious that words convey many things to different people as they come to the text.

VARIOUS NUANCES OF THE GREEK WORDS TRANSLATED BY THE KJV AS "OBEY" AND "RULE OVER YOU"

In seeking the intent of the author of the Hebrews writer, one must deliberate upon the function or functions of the Greek words employed by the ultimate author of Holy Scripture, namely the Holy Spirit. Several modern scholars have followed this trend of "authority" as advanced by the King James' scholars. Even the NIV employs the word *authority* in its translation of this verse: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority" (**Hebrews 13:17**). Translators assume, to some extent, the role of an exegete. Translators are often influenced by other translations when they set forth another translation. A few years ago, this author discussed this presupposition of authority in **Hebrews 13:17** with a translator. After looking at the Greek text together, he admitted that he had not looked at the Greek text very closely. He then informed me that his translation of Hebrews stems from other versions.

Leaders seldom ask what this text means; the interpretation of this passage has become normative and is passed on to other Christians as authoritative. It is difficult for believers to hear God accurately because of traditions. A part of the dilemma that the church faces today is an accurate rendering of the Greek text. Before one can draw an accurate reading of this text, one must also consult the Greek text in order to discover the words employed by the author(s) so that one may draw conclusions that are in harmony with the Word of God as a whole. To begin with, the English word *obey* is from the Greek word πειψθω (peiqw, "to persuade," "to have confidence"). The next English phrase is "rule over you," but the Greek word is ηΣγεψομαι (&geomai, "to lead"). The author of Hebrews actually uses the participle (ηΣγουμεψνοϊ, &hgoumenois, "leading ones"), which simply means the ones leading you. And the third word is the English word *submit*, which is from the Greek word υΣπειψκω (&upeikw, "submit").

The problem of confusion over the role that leaders play within the Christian community lies, to some extent, within the translation of the KJV. But this puzzlement is not limited just to the KJV. In fact, as stated above, other translations also contribute to the misunderstanding. The NIV for instance, translates the Greek word peiqw as "obey." But, on the other hand, the NIV translates the Greek word &geomai as "leaders," instead of "rule over you." Yet, after translating &geomai as leaders, then they add the word "authority." One can quickly see how the reader can draw unfounded

conclusions based upon the English translations. So the fault is not necessarily the result of the person who reads, even though one should know that something is wrong with the English translations since the common translations violate another Scripture (**Matthew 20:25-28**).

One would think that every Christian is eager to obey God. Thus, it seems, at least to this author, that the traditional interpretation is not based on evil motives. But, nevertheless, the end result of this faulty rendering promotes the usurpation of authority over God's people. And, as a result of defective interpretation, one's misguided zeal nullifies the teachings of Jesus against the seizure of power by certain individuals among His people. Even though one may respect Godly men who aspire to leadership, one cannot help but detect difficulties within the current rationalization of one Scripture that cancels out another Scripture. In the investigation of **Hebrews 13:17**, the study of morphology should shed some light upon the dilemma that individuals face in seeking to be true to the Word of God.

MORPHOLOGY:

THE STUDY OF WORD FORMATION

Before one embarks upon the words utilized by the author of **Hebrews 13:17**, one should undertake a study of the formation of words in order to appreciate more fully the analysis of **Hebrews 13:17** that is offered in this study to facilitate the correct application of the words utilized by the author to convey his intended meanings by the particular words he chooses. In order to set the stage for a proper interpretation of **Hebrews 13:17**, this essay seeks to present a brief analysis of the field of morphology (A study of forms that enter into the structure of words in a language.). This kind of study should lay the scene for a more enlightened appreciation for the various words employed by the author of Hebrews, as well as other authors.

Hopefully, this study of morphology will assist one in his/her search for a clearer comprehension of the import that is attached to any particular word. The primary role that morphology plays in the field of exegesis is helpful for a clearer understanding in one's interpretation. What is morphology? In the field of science, morphology describes the study of the form of living organisms. On the other hand, in the field of linguistics, morphology pertains to the study of word formation. Exegesis begins with morphology. In the study of morphology, one is confronted with the words *morpheme* and phoneme.

Morphemes

What is a morpheme? Neal Windham defines a morpheme this way: "The *morpheme* is to a word what the arm is to a body; it is a part of the word, distinguishable from all others by its unique makeup and function."[22] Windham illustrates his definition with the following: "It is of utmost importance that you go well beyond the level of morphological analysis in studying vocabulary."[23] He then takes the two words *utmost*

and *importance* to demonstrate what morphemes are. In "utmost" you have two morphemes—"ut" and "most." Then in "importance" you have three morphemes—"im" and "por" and "tance."

One does not read in morphemes, but morphemes do contribute to the meaning of words. One may have a root morpheme that forms the nucleus of a word, while, at the same time, morphemes may be added to the root. For instance, morphemes may be added to the root word "obey" and may be called prefixes or suffixes. That is to say, the prefixes or suffixes may be called affixes. For example, in the word obey, one can add an "s," or "ed," or "ing" to the word *obey*—obeys, obeyed, or obeying. The affixes are "s," "ed", and "ing." These affixes are called suffixes. On the other hand, affixes placed before the root are prefixes; for example, "re" in require, and "un" in unsaved. And finally, affixes appearing in the middle of words are called infixes.

For a combination of prefixes and suffixes added to a root, look up the word *antidisestablishmentarianism* (*anti dis establishment arian ism*), which means

> The theory (ism) of those who (arian) oppose (anti) the breakdown (dis) of the organization of church and state (establishment). There are three prefixes (anti-, dis, and e [from ek]) and six suffixes (bl [from able], ish, ment, ari, an, and ism) built upon the root sta [from the Greek Ἱστημι (&isthmi, "I stand").[24]

Black also gives one of the most informative statements concerning the distinction between root and stem that one can read. He goes right to the very core of the difference when he writes:

> A root must be carefully distinguished from a stem. A stem is any construction to which an affix can be added. Whereas roots always contain a single morpheme, a stem may consist of a root plus an affix. For example, dress is a single morpheme. In the verb undress, dress is the root to which un—is prefixed. It is also the stem. In undressing, dress is still the root or base, but undress is the stem with the suffix—ing. Thus, all roots are stems, but not all stems are roots. In the word blackbirds, black and bird are roots, while blackbird is the stem to which the suffix—s is attached. Stems that consist of two roots are called compounds.[25]

The Morphological System:

Structure of the Greek Language

To understand the structure of the Greek language, one must visualize the morphological system by which its words are constructed. Since words may be made up of several morphemes, one must have a procedure for identifying these minimal parts. Some morphemes are referred to as free morphemes because they can form words without being attached to any

other form. For instance, the word *dog* is a free morpheme. This word can form a morpheme without being associated to any other morpheme. In the plural (dogs), you have two morphemes: "dog" and "s." Thus, the "s" is a bound morpheme. Bound morphemes do not necessarily define meaning.

To illustrate this statement, consider the word *hit*. "Hit" is a free morpheme; but "hits" contains a bound morpheme ("s"). But what does "hits" mean? Context is the deciding factor. For example, take the sentence, "The car *hits* the mail box," or the sentence, "The singer had many *hits*. In the first sentence, the phoneme ("the minimal unit of speech sound in a given language that distinguishes one utterance from another"[26]) "s" signifies the third person singular, whereas in the second sentence, the phoneme "s" signifies the plural.[27] In like manner, "the 'er' in hitter and greater forms two different morphemes meaning 'one who' and 'comparative form of the adjective,' respectively," writes Black.[28]

Phonemes

As observed above, in addition to morphemes, there are also phonemes in words. Remember that a phoneme is the minimal unit of speech sounds in a language that distinguishes one utterance from another. Windham illustrates this distinction with the words *pie* and *lie*. For instance, the "p" in "pie" and the "l" in "lie," distinguish these two words.[29] Each phoneme is essential to a correct identification of the vocalization. Phonemes help to convey a specific meaning or concept in a language. Generally speaking, morphemes are longer than phonemes. Morphemes may also help to furnish lexical meaning as well as point toward grammatical distinctions.

GRAMMATICAL ELEMENTS IN THE GREEK VERB ΛΥΨΩ LUW

To illustrate the grammatical elements in the Greek, the verb λυψω (luw, "I loose") is used to draw attention to the importance of identification of morphemes. The morpheme ω (w) appears in the present active indicative of λυψω (luw, "I loose").[30] The ω informs one that the verb has as its subject an individual person who is loosing. The following chart is listed in order to illustrate how the grammatical morpheme helps the reader to determine whether the first, second, or third person is under consideration and also to determine whether the verb is singular or plural:

Chart: The Verb Λυψω Luw, "I Loose"

λυψ ω	luw "I loose"	λυ ψο μεν	luomen "we loose"
λυ ψεϊ	lueis "you loose"	λυ ψε τε	luete "you loose"
λυ ψει	luei "he looses"	λυ ψουσι	luousi "they loose"

In "I loose," the grammatical morpheme ω (w) identifies this verb as a present active indicative, first person singular.

To illustrate the lexical elements in the Greek noun, the noun ηΣγεψομαι (&geomai)[31] is chosen since this is a form of the word employed in **Hebrews 13:17**. This Greek word describes "the ones leading you." By analyzing the lexical morphemes in the word &geomai, this will enable the reader to understand more clearly the import of the word. ᾯΗγεψομαι (&geomai) is built on the root ΑΓ (ag, "drive," "lead," "weigh"), which generally has to do with "leading."[32] Harold Greenlee's comments are helpful in this particular area:

> For words whose derivation is not obvious, the derivation is given in parentheses—e.g., ηΣγεψομαι (α[γω, agw). In some instances in which doubt remained, I have consulted other works including the unabridged editions of LS [Liddell—Scott].[33]

The word ηΣγεψομαι is irregular, but, nevertheless, the root is AG (ag). The "a" in "ag" changed to long "h" (η). To assist the reader in recognizing the root in various words, the following list is reduplicated from Metzger's book on *Lexical Aids*:

Chart: The Root ΑΓ AG:

Words Formed from This Root

GREEK	TRANSLITERATION	DEFINITION
α[γω	agw	I lead
ασναψγω	anagw	I lead up; middle, I put to sea, set sail
ασπαψγω	apagw	I lead away
εισαψγω	eisagw	I lead in, I bring in
εξξαψγω	exagw	I lead out
παραψγω	paragw	I pass by
περιαψγω	periagw	I lead about, I go about
προαψγω	proagw	I lead forth, go about
συναψγω	sunagw	I gather together
συναγωγηψ	sunagwgh	a synagogue
αρχισυναψγωγö	arcisunagwgos	a ruler of the synagogue
εσπισυναψγω	episunagw	I collect, gather together at one place
υΣπαψγω	&upagw	I depart
αγροψ́	agros	place where cattle are led or driven, a field
ηΣγεψομαι	&hgeomai	I am chief; I think, regard; I lead through the mind
ηΣγεμωψν	&hgemwn	a leader, governor
α[ξιö	axios	(of equal weight), worthy
αξιοψω	axiow	I deem worthy, think fit

αςξιψϋ	axiws	worthily
αςγωψν	agwn	an athletic contest, a contest[34]

As noted above, Metzger gives the following definitions associated with the root "ag": "drive, lead, weight." One may wonder why he assigns these definitions with the root "ag." The following chart helps one to focus in on the various shades of meaning to be attached to words with this root:

ROOT	MEANING	EXAMPLE	DEFINITION
αςγ	Lead	α[γω (agw)	I lead
	Drive	εςξαψγω (exagw)	I lead out
	Weight	εςπισυναψγω (episunagw)	I gather together at one place[35]

Another word that plays a major role in the interpretation of **Hebrews 13:17** is the Greek word πειψθω (peiqw). An understanding of the morpheme of peiqw should assist one in properly understanding the significance of this word as employed by the writer of Hebrews. The root πιθ (piq, "bind") appears in a large number of Greek words. In some formations, the πιθ inserts an ε (e) before the ι (i) to form a diphthong (a combination of two vowels in a single syllable). The diphthong ει (ei) is pronounced as a long "a"; with the combination of π (p), the syllable πει (pei) is pronounced as "pay." The following chart illustrates a sample of the πιθ (piq) words:

Chart: The Root Πιθ Piq:

Words Formed from This Root

GREEK	TRANSLITERATION	DEFINITION
πειψθω	peiqw	I persuade (bind myself)
αςπειθεψω	apeiqew	I disbelieve, disobey (not let myself be bound)
αςπειψθεια	apeiqeia	disobedience, rebellion
αςςπειθηψ́	apeiqhs	disobedient
πεποιψθησϊ	pepoiqhsis	trust, confidence
πιψστϊ	pistis	faithful, believing
α[πιστϋ	apistos	unbelieving, faithless
αςπιστιψα	apistia	unbelief
οςςλιγοψπιστϋ	oligopistos	of little faith
πιστευψω	pisteuw	I have faith (in) believe
αςπιστευψω	apisteuw	I am unfaithful, disbelieve[36]

Hopefully, the foregoing charts serve to illustrate the complexity in determining the meaning of a particular word. When one understands the basic meaning of the root word, this does give assistance in understanding the various words built upon the root. Another example should also clarify how the root sheds light upon the various applications. The root morpheme in the Greek word λυψω (luw) is λυ (lu), which means, "to loose." Consider the following chart:

Chart: The Root Λυ Lu:

Words Formed from this Root

ROOT	MEANING	EXAMPLE	DEFINITION
λυ (lu)	loose	λυψω (luo)	I loose
		αϛϛπολυψω (apoluw)	I release, loose from
		αϛϛπολυψτρωσϊ (apolutrwsis)	Redemption, releasing
		καταλυψω (kataluw)	I lodge (after loosing my clothing)
		παραλυψομαι (paraluomai)	I am a paralytic (I am unstrung)
		παραλυτικοψ̈ (paralutikos)	paralytic[37]

One can detect—just from a cursory glance at the root of λυψω—from the above chart the various combinations that results in the various uses of the Greek root λυ. A similar observation of the Greek verb for rule (α[ρχω, arcw). The root of this Greek word is αϛρχ (arc), which means, "be first." There is also the noun form αϛρχηψ (arch), which means, "a beginning." The following chart lists several words built upon the root (αϛρχ):

Chart: The Root Αρχ Arc:

Words Formed from This Root

ROOT	MEANING	EXAMPLE	DEFINITION
αϛϛρχ (arc)	"be first"	α[ρχω (arcw)	(first in point of station), I rule; middle, (first in point of time), I begin
		α[ρχων (arcwn)	a ruler
		αϛρχηψ (arce)	a beginning
		αϛϛρχαι'ö (arcaios)	old, ancient

		αςρχιερευψ arceireus)	A chief priest, high priest
		υΣΣπαψρχω (&uparcw)	(I am under as a foundation, support), I am, I exist, I belong to
		αςςπαρχηψ (aparch)	first fruits[38]

The root meaning of a word can assist one in understanding the underlying meaning attached to a particular word. This understanding of morphology assists one as he/she endeavors to ascertain the meaning of a word in a given context. As one embarks upon an interpretation of **Hebrews 13:17**, this comprehension of how to analyze words with the same basic root meaning helps one in the determination of the meaning to be attached to any particular word.

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF ΠΕΙΨΘΩ PEIQW

> Obey (Πειψθεσθε, Peiqesqe) them that have the rule over you (ηΣγουμεψνοϊ, &hgoumenois), and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you (**Hebrews 13:17**, KJV).

The question that confronts everyone is, what definition should one attach to the Greek word that is translated as "obey" in **Hebrews 13:17**? Is there justification for translating πειψθω (peiqw) as "obey"? Yes! But it all depends on what you mean by "obey." The author of this Epistle is not suggesting that Christians "unscrew" their heads and let certain ones in the congregation do their thinking for them. Thus, if one has this kind ("lord it over") of an attitude about "obey," then this is not correct. If, on the other hand, one interprets the Greek word as "obey" in reference to what he said earlier in this same chapter (**vv. 1-7**), then "obey" would be a legitimate translation.

The kind of domination that many elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals advance is the opposite of what Paul writes, as cited above, to the Corinthians: "Not that we lord it over (κυριευψομεν kurieuomen) your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm" (**2 Corinthians 1:24**). Alfred Marshall in his transliteration of the Greek text translates the Greek word κυριευψομεν (kurieuomen) as "we rule over."[39] But Paul negates this "we rule over" with "not"—"not that we rule over." Yet, today, elders, who are not inspired, claim rule over God's children. It is in this identical vein that Peter cautions elders about exercising "rule" over God's people. Listen, once more, to Peter as he issues his warning:

> To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: [2] Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care,

serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; [3] not lording it over (κατακυριευψοντë katakurieuontes) those entrusted to you, but being examples (τυψποι tupoi) to the flock. [4] And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. [5] Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (**1 Peter 5:1-5**).

Christians were to imitate their shepherds' (leaders) daily walk with God. This kind of submission is the same exhortation to the Hebrews: "imitate their faith" (**13:7**). As one seeks to eliminate so much tradition that covers the Word of God, it is necessary to repeat over and over again the Scriptures that deny the traditional view concerning the proper sphere of leadership. Peter's words ought to be considered in one's interpretation of the Hebrews passages. One cannot set in opposition one Scripture against another as Satan did in his encounter with Jesus (see **Matthew 4:1-11**). The thrust of **Hebrews 13:7**, for instance, deals with imitating the life of godly men (leaders) who were examples of holiness in daily living: "Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." These "leading ones" pursued righteousness, love, peace, and faith.

These godly men had put their Christianity into practice. They possessed the mind of Christ (see **Philippians 2:1-8**). These leaders were individuals who maintained the characteristics that Paul enumerates in his short epistle to Titus:

[5] The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. [6] An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. [7] Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. [8] Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. [9] He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. [10] For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. [11] They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. [12] Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." [13] This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will

be sound in the faith [14] and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. [15] To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. [16] They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good (**Titus 1:5-16**).

No child of God will rebel against the kind of leadership that Paul draws attention to. On the contrary, one will subject himself/herself readily and courteously to the behavior set forth by elders. For Paul, an elder had to hold firmly to the message of salvation, that is to say, Jesus as God's way of salvation—not Jesus plus circumcision. Those who advance another way of salvation other than "faith" in Jesus as God's way of salvation should be considered anathema, whether by elders, preachers, editors of religious journals, or angels (see **Galatians 1:6-9**).[40]

Why did Peter write what he did in **1 Peter 5:1-5**? Why did Paul write to the Corinthians what he did in **2 Corinthians 1:24**? Both of these Scriptures must be taken into consideration as one seeks a proper understanding of **Hebrews 13:17**. If one considers the participles in the Hebrews' passages, then one can arrive at an interpretation that is in harmony with the whole of God's Word. It is significant that the participles employed by the author of Hebrews speak of leaders, not rulers. God's leaders are to serve, not to have power over. Leaders do not have the "right of sovereignty" over one's faith. If God had given leaders such sovereignty, then those under the selected few could not be held accountable in the event of false doctrine embraced by the leaders.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says: "Not that we lord it over (κυριευψομεν kurieuomen[41]) your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm" (**2 Corinthians 1:24**). Paul specifically says, "not that we lord it over your faith." This particular Greek word that Paul employs in **2 Corinthians 1: 24** is clearly missing in **Hebrews 13: 7, 17**, and **24**. The so-called rulers today cite **Hebrews 13:17** to give clout to their abuse of this passage. What is significant about the participle is that this verse does not use the Greek word for elder (πρεσβυψτερö presbuteras, "an old man, an elder"—used of age), but the word for leading (ηΣγεψομαι Jhgeomai). This text does not identify the ones leading. The Greek participle is more comprehensive and more sweeping than is the word *elder*.

Is not the answer to these two questions (proposed above) to be found in Jesus' rebuke of the apostles when they were arguing about who is the greatest? Listen to Jesus as he cautions the disciples about their striving for positions of power:

[25] Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers (α[ρχοντë arcontes) of the Gentiles lord it over

(κατακυριευψουσιν katakurieuousin[42]) them, and their high officials exercise authority (κατεξουσιαψζουσιν katexousiazousin[43]) over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (**Matthew 20:25-28**).

The religious leaders (elders, preachers, and bishop editors) still demand absolute control over the faith of its members. They think they are "rulers," even though God has never made them rulers. One can learn once more from Matthew's account of Jesus' warning against the religious leaders of His day:

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 So you must obey (ποιηψσατε poihsate, "do you") them and do (τηρει'τε threite, "keep") everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. 4 They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. 5 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' 8 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. 9 And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (**Matthew 23:1-12**).

Jesus' rebuke of the religious leaders for their hypocrisy—say and do not--and the admonition to the crowd to do what they say is an excellent commentary on **Hebrews 13:17**. The author of Hebrews calls attention to leaders who not only said, but were also leaders who practiced what they preached. The Hebrews' author writes: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (**13:7**). In addition to his castigation of the religious leaders for their lack of faithfulness to God in their daily lives, He also rebukes them for their elevated opinion of themselves. The traditional interpretation of **Hebrews 13:17** does not fit in with the teachings of Jesus, Paul, nor Peter. In other words, the believers were to imitate their leaders, not just in the sense of doctrine—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—but they were also to put their faith into practice in their daily lives.

Πειψθω (peiqw) and the Imperative Mood

The author of Hebrews employs the imperative mood in **13:17**. But the imperative mood is not just associated with commands; it is also employed in the sense of encouragement, that is to say, to encourage or ask someone to do something.[44] The context is the deciding factor. But the word may also be translated "persuade" or "win over." The word *persuade* does not carry the same nuance that the word *obey* conjures up in the mind. Many leaders have taken a perfectly good word and turned it into something that has almost a threatening tone. For this reason, this paper will extensively cite Scriptures in which the word peiqw occurs—or at least some form of this word. The background of the passage must be consulted to determine which word is the most appropriate for the situation in the twenty-first century. There are numerous Scriptures within which the word πειψθω (peiqw) occurs. One discovers that sometimes one translation fits the context better than another translation. The form that appears in the Greek text is Πειψθεσθε (Peiqesqe), which means, "be persuaded" or "to have confidence." The identification of this verb is a second person, plural, present, passive, imperative.

Even though the word is imperative, and may be translated "obey," nevertheless, the context seems to require the translation of "be persuaded," which is not quite as harsh as the current use of the word *obey*. To illustrate the passive imperative, Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is quite helpful in this matter of interpretation. Paul writes: "Do not get drunk (μηΨ μεθυψσκεσθε, mh mequskesqe) on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled (πληρου'σθε, plhrousqe) with the Spirit" (**Ephesians 5:18**). The first phrase "Do not get drunk" and the second phrase "be filled" are present, passive, and imperative forms. The Greek construction of both verbs in **Ephesians 5:18** are identical in form to **Hebrews 13:17**. The focus of **Hebrews 13:17** is that of "be persuaded." Obedience is the underlying tone of the phrase "be persuaded."

The English word *obey* is too strong a translation for πειψθω (peiqw), at least in this context. Even though obedience is inherent in this word, nevertheless, "persuasion" is the nuance to be attached to peiqw, rather than the word *obey*. The objective of "persuasion," as employed by the author of Hebrews, is to seek allegiance or submission on the part of the hearers. An excellent example of this meaning is also found in Luke's narrative of Paul's defense before king Agrippa. When Paul seeks to persuade Agrippa to respond to the Gospel, he is seeking obedience to the Good News of God's Way of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. Listen to Paul as he addresses Agrippa:

> The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced (πειψθομαι, peiqomai[45]) that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do." 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time

> you can persuade (πειψθεϊ, peiqeis[46]) me to be a Christian?" [29] Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains" (**Acts 26:26-29**).

The New American Standard Bible translates the word peiqomai as "persuaded" rather than "convinced": "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner" (**26:26**).[47] Then in verse twenty-eight, the verb is translated as "persuade" (NASB). The Contemporary English Version translates the Greek word peiqeis as "talk me": "Agrippa asked Paul, "In such a short time do you think you can talk me into being a Christian?"[48] The concept that lies behind the word peiqw is the idea of convincing or talking to someone in order to bring about a desired behavior. The idea is not that of a single individual or a group of men operating as a board of directors to issue ultimatums to be carried out by lay-people.

Even if one should translate πειψθω (peiqw) as "obey," the question that must be answered is, what were they to obey? Does this obedience require blind obedience to a select group of men who act as infallible interpreters of the Word of God? Can other individuals (leaders) demand conformity to their way of thinking?[49] For example, one's views on Sunday school, individual communion cups, church treasury, grape juice in the Lord's Supper, breaking bread, pinching bread, and so on, are interpreted differently in various fellowships. Is there a certain group of elders that everyone must submit to? What is happening within the various factions of the Churches of Christ today is the same thing that John, an Apostle of Jesus, encountered with Diotrephes:

> I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. [10] So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church (**3 John 9-10**).

The "Diotrephian Spirit" is still alive and well on planet earth. Are men and women not responsible for studying the Scriptures for themselves? Many well-meaning leaders adopt a "Diotrephian" spirit toward other believers. This same spirit is still prevalent among sincere Christian leaders. Many leaders refuse fellowship with other believers if their views do not coincide with their own presuppositions. Many Christian leaders will not accept another Christian if his/her interpretation does not harmonize with their interpretation on divorce and remarriage, the use of one container in the Lord's Supper for the distribution of the fruit of the vine, the manner of breaking or pinching of the bread in the Lord's Supper, the employment of Sunday school, and so on.

Are Christians to surrender all interpretation of God's Word to a select few—three or four men? Do certain men speak *ex cathedra*?[50]

Again, as one reflects upon the context of **Hebrews 13:17**, one discovers that the area of controversy centers around the English word *obey*; this translation is responsible for all kinds of havoc within the Churches of Christ. Just what is the author of Hebrews seeking to convey when he admonishes the believers to submit (obey) to their leaders? If one would begin with verse one of this chapter, one would quickly see that this obedience involves holiness as one's way of life. For instance, one should read carefully and thoughtfully the following advice:

> Keep on loving each other as brothers. [2] Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. [3] Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. [4] Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. [5] Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (**Hebrews 13:1-5**).

The obedience required in **Hebrews 13:17** had to do with loving one another, entertaining strangers, ministering to those in prison, faithfulness to the marriage covenant, eliminating covetousness, and learning contentment. Is it any wonder that the author of Hebrews encourages the believers to "be persuaded" by their leaders to right ethical behavior? This obedience had nothing to do with blind conformity to fallible interpreters who insisted that everyone must comply with their brand of orthodoxy. This philosophy of "obey them that have the rule over you" contradicts **1 Corinthians 8** and **Romans 14 and 15**. **Hebrews 13:7** also adds credence to the above scenario of certain things to be added to their daily walk with God. Did the leaders walk this way? The author says;

> "Remember your leaders (ηΣγουμεψνων, &hgomenwn, "the ones leading you"), who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. [8] Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (**13:7**).

The Christians were to "consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." This is the obedience that the Hebrews author is pleading. It is significant that even the word &hgoumenwn is translated as "rule" in the King James Version. The NIV translates this word as "leaders." Again, as one seeks to comprehend the word that Paul employs (peiqw), one's attention upon this particular word should be of help. Listen to W. E. Vine as he draws attention to this neglected aspect of correct interpretation:

> 2. PEITHOM (πειψθω, (3982)), to persuade, to win over, in the Passive and Middle Voices, to be persuaded, to listen to, to obey, is so used with this meaning, in the Middle Voice, e.g.,

> in Acts 5:36, 37 (in ver. 40, Passive Voice, "they agreed"); Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 3:3. The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion. [51]

Vine correctly states the force of the word when he says, "The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion." Words frequently convey many different meanings. One must be careful that he/she does not import motives to the writer that he never had. If one allows his/her presuppositions to interfere with what the author actually said, one may miss the originally intended relationship projected by the word employed. The word πειψθω (peiqw) occurs approximately fifty-five times in the New Testament. This word is translated as "persuaded," "trusted," "obeyed," "agreed," "made," "confidence," and so on. The context is the determinative factor in seeking a proper translation of this word in order to convey accurately the intent of the author. The following Scripture citations illustrate how scholars translate the word πειψθω (peiqw) in other contexts:

> But the chief priests and the elders persuaded (ε[πεισαν, epeisan [52]) the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed (**Matthew 27:20**).
>
> Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied (εςπειψθοντο, epeiqonto[53]) to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing (**Acts 5:36**).
>
> Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively (πειψθων, peiqwn[54]) about the kingdom of God (**Acts 19:8**).
>
> Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade (πειψθεϊ, peiqeis[55]) me to be a Christian?" (**Acts 26:28**).
>
> They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince (πειψθων, peiqwn[56]) them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets (**Acts 28:23**).
>
> You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying (πειψθεσθαι, peiqesqai[57]) the truth? (**Galatians 5:7**)

Even though the word *obey* is an accurate translation of the Greek word πειψθω (peiqw), nevertheless, the English word *obey* is too strong and does not carry the nuance that is to be attached to the basic meaning of the

Greek. One cannot deny that "obedience" is associated with the word peiqw. **Hebrews 13:17** does teach obedience, but the question is, Obedience to what? The conformity (obedience) is to the pattern of teaching concerning ethical behavior, not the blind whims of a few select individuals who have set themselves up as infallible interpreters. Bultmann makes the following succinct observation that peiqw does sometimes carry the connotation, or implication, of "obedience." He writes:

> The use of πειψθεσθαι (peiqesqai) is of no great theological significance in any of these passages apart from R. 2:8; Gl. 5:7. Underlying the antithesis of R. 2:8 is the thought that the true relation to God is that of obedience. . . . In Gl. 5:7 the πειψθεσθαι αςληθειψα (peiqesqai alhqeia) is materially though not verbally identical with the υΣπακουψειν τω' ευςαγγελιψώ (&uakouein tw euaggeliw) of R. 10.16.[58]

Bultmann parallels the following Scriptures to illustrate that one who rejects, or disobeys (**Romans 2:8**), the truth is on par with one not obeying (**Romans 10:17**) the truth, even though two different Greek words are employed in the two passages.

ROMANS 2:8	GALATIANS 5:7-8	ROMANS 10:16
But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth (αςπειθου'σι τή' αςληθειψα, apeiqousi th alhqeia) and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.	You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth (τή'] αςληθειψά μηΨ πειψθεσθαιΨ, th alhqeia mh peiqesqai)?	But not all the Israelites accepted the good news (υΣπηψκουσαν τω' ευςαγγελιψω, &uphkousan tw euaggeliw). For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

In **Romans 2:8**, Paul uses the negative of peiqw ("reject," or "not to be persuaded"), but the same word in Galatians—without the alpha privitive—is translated "persuasion." On the other hand, Bultmann maintains that one who is not persuaded, or one who obeys not the truth in **Galatians 5:7** is tantamount to the ones not obeying the Gospel in **Romans 10:16**, even though two different words are employed—in **Galatians 5:7** (πειψθω, "to persuade," "to have confidence") and in **Romans 10:17** (υΣπακουψω, "to listen," "to attend"). Yet these two words are, in some sense, synonyms, nevertheless, πειψθω (peiqw) carries the nuance of persuasion.

The Greek word employed by Paul in **Romans 10:17** is also used by him in Ephesians concerning children obeying their parents. He writes: "Children, obey (υΣπακουψετε, &upakouete[59]) your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (**Ephesians 6:1**). Πειψθω may carry the idea of obedience

in some contexts. The Greek word υΣπακουψω j&upakouw ("obey") seems to carry a different nuance than the Greek word peiqw ("persuade"). Words conjure up a number of associations in one's minds. Since words convey a special flavor, it is important that an interpreter operate in the same context as the author. The easiest way to learn the principal terms is to study examples that illustrate the various nuances assigned to each word in context. In order to accomplish this task, the following examples will search words as employed in the Classical Greek usage, the Septuagint, and the New Testament in order to uncover the various meanings behind πειψθω.

Examples of the Imperative Mood

As stated above, the verb πειψθω (peiqw) in **Hebrews 13:17** is a present passive imperative. Since this word is an imperative form, the translations, as a whole, tend toward translating this as a command. But, the imperative mood is also used to encourage or ask someone to do something. The original significance of the imperative is command or exhortation, but it is not confined to this idea.[60] For example, the imperative mood is also utilized for entreaty: "Holy Father, protect (τηψρησον, thrhson,[61] "to watch over," "to guard") them by the power of your name" (**John 17:11**). Even though Jesus utilizes the imperative in His prayer to the Father, one would not translate this as Jesus commanding the Father to do something, but rather of Jesus' entreaty to the Father. The basic concept of the present passive imperative in **Hebrews 13:17** appears to be that of exhortation—keep on being persuaded by the ones leading you to live holy lives.

One does not command God to do something, but rather he/she entreats God. Another example of imperative used in the sense of entreaty is found in the so-called Lord's Prayer in Matthew. Matthew writes: "Give (δοΨ, dos,[62] "to give" [in various senses literally or figuratively]) us today our daily bread" (**Matthew 6:11**). One cannot command God, even though the imperative is used in the prayer, but rather one entreats God to give him/her daily bread. The imperative is built on the present tense stem and indicates a continuous action. The aorist, on the other hand, speaks of undefined action. To assist one in identification of the imperative mood, the following chart is given to aid one in classification:

Chart: Imperative Translation of Λυψω Luw

	PRESENT	FIRST AORIST	TRANSLATION
	ACTIVE		
2sg	λυ'ε (lue)	λυ'σον (luson)	(You) loose!
3sg	λυεψτω (luetw)	λυ'σατω (lusatw)	Let him loose!
2pl	λυψετε (luete)	λυψσατε (lusate)	(You) loose!
3pl	λυεψτωσαν (luetwsan)	λυσαψτωσαν (lusatwsan)	Let them loose!
	MIDDLE		
2sg	λυψου (luou)	λυ'σαι (lusai)	(You) loose for yourself!
3sg	λυψεσθω	λυσαψσθω	Let him loose for

	(luesqw)	(lusasqw)	himself!
2pl	λυψεσθε (luesqe)	λυψσασθε (lusasqe)	(You) loose!
3pl	λυεψσθωσαν (luesqwsan)	λυσαψσθωσαν (lusasqwsan)	Let them loose!
	PASSIVE		
2sg	λυψου (luou)	λυ'σαι (lusai)	(You) be loosed!
3sg	λυψεσθω (luesqw)	λυσαψσθω (lusasqw)	Let him be loosed!
2pl	λυψεσθε (luesqe)	λυψσασθε (lusasqe)	(You) be loosed!
3pl	λυεψσθωσαν (luesqwsan)	λυσαψσθωσαν (lusasqwsan)	Let them be loosed!

To help the reader arrive at a clearer perception of the present passive in **Hebrews 13:17**, the following discussion seeks to explore the Classical Period, the Hellenistic (Septuagint) Period, and the Koine Greek Period. The purpose of this study is to aid one in finding the English words which most correctly expresses the original Greek words in **Hebrews 13:17**. Also, in this study, one must consider synonyms in order to arrive at a more accurate rendering of the verse. Synonyms help to ascertain the full meaning of a context. One must also be conscious of one word over another. If the Holy Spirit guides one writer to choose one word over another in a given context, then it may be important to understand why He did so.

Classical Greek Usage of Πειψθω Peiqw

In Classical Greek[63] πειψθω (peiqw) is a many-sided term. It has two basic meanings. In the active voice, it means to persuade or convince. On the other hand, the passive voice conveys the idea of "to be persuaded," which is the second basic understanding. The nuances of the passive voice include the following definitions: "to trust, to rely upon, to have confidence in."[64] Liddell-Scott translates the active voice as "prevail upon, persuade, usu. by fair means," and they translate the passive voice as "to be prevailed on, won over, persuaded."[65] Persuasion is the basic concept of the passive, and this perception of the passive played a major role in Greek thinking.

Hellenistic (LXX) Greek usage of Πειψθω Peiqw

The translators of the Septuagint (LXX) used peiqw to translate ten different Hebrew words. However, any Greek thought of "persuading" is foreign to Semitic thought.[66] The Hebrew word jf^B* (B*f^j) is consistently translated in the LXX by the Greek word peiqw. The idea of the Hebrew word is "to trust, put confidence in, inspire trust." For example, consider the following Scriptures from the Hebrew and Septuagint:

19 The field commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah:

"'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence (B*f^j or peiqw) of yours (**2 Kings**

18:19)?
Will you rely (B*f^j or peiqw) on him for his great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to him (**Job 39:11**)?

Whoever trusts (B*f^j or peiqw) in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf (**Proverbs 11:28**).

Unlike the Classical Greek Age, the LXX translators did not employ peiqw with the idea of "persuasion," but rather with "trust" (nuance of the passive). Peiqw is selected by the LXX to describe putting confidence in God or to depict allegiance to something other than God. One was to "trust" or to "put one's "confidence in" God. For instance, consider the following Scriptures:

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment Blessed are all who take refuge (peiqw) in him (**Psalm 2:12**).

Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts (peiqw) in the LORD (**Proverbs 16:20**).

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah develop this theme of trust with the use of peiqw. In other words, the Israelites must put their trust in God, the Holy One of Israel. In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek word peiqw is a term employed to describe Israel's covenant relationship, or lack of it, to God. Peiqw in the Septuagint closely approximates πιστευψω (pisteuw, "to trust, to believe in, to have faith in").

Hellenistic Usage (The New Testament) of Πειθω Peiqw

The New Testament usage resembles the Classical Greek usage in that it bears actively the sense of "to persuade, to convince," or passively "to be convinced." Peiqw appears in the Synoptic Gospels but not in John. Luke uses this word twenty-one times, more than any other writer in the New Testament. To illustrate the Attic (Hellenistic—active) usage of "persuasion" in the New Testament, one's attention should focus upon an episode that took place between Jesus and the religious leaders. For example, Luke records a conversation that took place between Jesus and the chief priest and the teachers of the Law. In this dialogue, Luke writes that the teachers of the Law and the priest sreasoned: "But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded (πεπεισμεψνö, pepeismenos[67]) that John was a prophet" (**Luke 20:6**).

Also, the writer of Hebrews uses a from of this same word when he writes: "Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident (Πεπειψσμεθα, pepeismeqa[68]) of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation" (**Hebrews 6:9**). The KJV translates this Greek word as "we are persuaded." Both of these passages (**Luke 20:6** and **Hebrews 6:9**) illustrate the Classical Greek usage rather than the Hellenistic biblical usage (LXX). The Book of Acts presents an almost rhetorical understanding of peiqw that parallels the Classical Greek perception of the expression. The speeches in Acts reveal the value that was placed upon the ability to

persuade. The following citations from Luke demonstrates this usage of the word peiqw in the various contexts:

> Some of the Jews were persuaded (εςπειψσθησαν, epeisqhsan [69]) and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women (**Acts 17:4**).
>
> And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced (πειψσά, peisas[70]) and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all (**Acts 19:26**).
>
> They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince (πειψθων, peiqwn[71]) them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets (**Acts 28:23**).
>
> Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade (ε[πειθεν, epiqen[72]) Jews and Greeks (**Acts 18:4**).
>
> Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively (πειψθων, peiqwn[73]) about the kingdom of God (**Acts 19:8**).
>
> Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade (πειψθεϊ, peiqeis[74]) me to be a Christian?" (**Acts 26:28**).

Paul's writings also reflect both the Hellenistic and the Classical Greek concept. The Hellenistic idea centers on the idea of "trust," but the Classical Greek idea involves the meaning of persuasion as well as trust. In the writings of Paul, one discovers that he employs the Greek word peiqw, as employed in the LXX (Septuagint), as "trust." For instance, in his letter to Rome, he writes: "But for those who are self-seeking and who reject (αςπειθου'σι, apeiqousi, "to disobey"[75]) the truth and follow (πειθομεψνοϊ,[76]) evil, there will be wrath and anger" (**Romans 2:8**). In other words, those placing confidence in themselves and following evil will incur God's wrath. The one who refuses to obey or trust God follows evil.

Another example of Paul's usage of peiqw (LXX usage) in the sense of "trust" is in his letter to the Corinthians: "Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely (πεποιθοψτε̈ pepoiqotes, "having trusted"[77]) on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead" (**2 Corinthians 1:9**). Also, Paul, in writing to the Philippians, uses this same Greek word in the sense of "trust": "For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence (πεποιθοψτε̈ pepoiqotes, "trusting") in the flesh— [4] though I myself have reasons for such confidence (πεποιθεψναι[78] pepoiqenai, "to trust")" (**Philippians 3:3-4**). As one

reflects upon these two verses, one quickly gathers that the words "believe and be obedient" are equivalent to "put one's trust in God."

Just a perusal of Paul's writings reveals that he employs the classical usage of "persuasion" in a number of passages. For example, Paul writes to the Christians in the southern part of Galatia: You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying (πειψθεσθαι[79] peiqesqai, "to be persuaded") the truth (**Galatians 5:7**)? Even though the NIV translators employed the word *obeying*, nevertheless, the idea is still that of "trust" or "persuasion." This dichotomy is sometimes difficult to differentiate. Still, Paul uses the word peiqw in the sense of "persuasion" (Classical Greek usage) in his writings. Paul sought to "persuade" men to follow Christ: "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade (πειψθομεν[80] peiqomen) men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience" (**2 Corinthians 5:11**).

This expression (we persuade) is a regular Pauline expression in his confidence regarding certain matters not being sinful. He writes to the Romans: "As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced (πεψπεισμαι[81] pepeismai, "have been persuaded") that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean" (**Romans 14:14**). Hopefully, the employment of repetition may be pardoned. Repetition is sometimes necessary since the minds of men and women are leavened by the traditional concept of "authority" leadership, which is still the prevailing opinion in much of Christendom. As a result of this kind of mentality, one quickly discovers that the vital truths of Christianity are secretly undermined or openly denied by religious leaders. Rudolf Bultmann is perfectly right when he pens:

1. πειψθω in the Active (apart from the Perfect).

   a. The act. πειψθειν is used in the NT in the customary senses, not always sharply differentiated, which are found in Gk. usage from the time of Homer: "to convince," "to persuade," "to seduce (by persuasion)," "to corrupt." The meaning "to convince" occurs in Plat.Resp., I, 327c; Thuc., III, 31, "to persuade" in Hom.Il., 9, 345; Plat.Resp., II, 364b, "to seduce" in Hom.Il., 6, 360, "to corrupt" in Hdt., VIII, 134; Lys., 21, 10. Indicative of the role of πειψθειν among the Gks. is the personification of Πειθωψ as a deity, e.g., Hes.Op., 73; Theog., 349. Whereas in Hom. πειψθειν appears only in the "determinative" sense "to persuade successfully," "to convince," in the period which follows the pres. usually expresses intention and the aor. success, though the context decides.[82]

THE ENGLISH WORD "OBEY" IS TOO STRONG FOR THE GREEK WORD ΠΕΙΨΘΩ IN HEBREWS 13:17

As one examines the context, one observes that the Greek word that is translated "obey" is not the most appropriate word for the twenty-first

century. Lawrence Richards has given an excellent commentary on the tone of the word *obey* as used by the Holy Spirit:

> Obey/Disobey
> Often our understanding of the Bible is subtly colored. When we read the Bible, we often import a tone of voice in our reading. The words we read may seem harsh or impersonal, or strident, and demanding, not because they are so used in the Bible, but because we intuitively feel this way about the words themselves. This is particularly a danger when we read of obedience or disobedience. All too often the warmth and love that infuse the passages that speak of them are replaced by a cold impersonality that we bring with us that robs Scripture of its meaning. . . .
>
> NT—The Greek words. The two different families of Greek words are linked with "obedience" and disobedience." Peiqw means "to convince" or "to persuade." It is logically linked with obedience; a person who is persuaded to obey a demand obeys it. This root is translated "obey" only three times in the NASB (Ro. 2:8; Heb. 13:17; Jam. 3:3. Another word from the same root is much stronger and is used of obeying a superior. That word is peiqarcew. It occurs four times in the NT (Ac. 5:29, 32; 27:21; Tit. 3:1).[83]

Richards correctly asserts that the idea is that leaders will seek to persuade other believers to be submissive to the teachings of the Messiah. This obedience is not submission to blind, dictatorial rule, but rather is a response to the love of God.

"LEADING ONES":

THE GREEK WORD *H*HGOUMENOIS

IN HEBREWS 13:17

Again, one must confront the context in order to arrive at the definition to be attached to the Greek word Jhgoumenois. Should this word be interpreted as "ruler" or "leader"? W. E. Vine's comments are very informative in dealing with this word Jhgoumenois. He writes:

> 1. HEMGEOMAI (ηΣγεψομαι , (2233)), akin to A, No. 1, is used in the present participle to denote a governor, lit., '(one) governing,' Matt. 2:6; Acts 7:10.
>
> 2. HEMGEMONEUOM (ηΣγεμονευψω , (2230)), to be a *heμgemoμn,* to lead the way, came to signify to be a governor of a Province; it is used of Quirinius, governor of Syria, Luke 2:2, R.V. (for the circumstances see under ENROLMENT); of Pontius

> Pilate, governor of Judæa, 3:1.¶ In the first clause of this verse the noun *heµgemonia,* a rule or sovereignty, is translated "reign;" Eng., hegemony.¶
> *Note.* In Jas. 3:4, the verb *euthunoµ,* to make or guide straight, is used in the present participle, as a noun, denoting the "steersman" (R.V.) or pilot of a vessel, A.V., "governor."[84]

Vine calls attention to the fact that the noun ηΣγεμωψν Jegemwn came to be applied to a governor. But the verb Jegemoneuw means to "lead the way." The translations that I have consulted, except the KJV, employs the word *leaders*, not rulers. An example of the word Jegemwn as being translated as "governor" is found in **Luke 22:20**:

> Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power (αςρχη' arch, "rule") and authority (εξξουσιψα exousia) of the governor (ηΣγεμοψνö Jegemonos).

Paul, in his first letter to Corinth, speaks of the "rulers" of this age: "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers (αςρχοψντων arcontwn) of this age, who are coming to nothing" (**1 Corinthians 2:6**). All over again, repetition is necessary sometimes in order to drive home a point that has been covered with a lot of underbrush of traditions for centuries. Even though the words of Jesus were previously cited, it is necessary to cite His words in full again in order for one to see at a glance how Jesus refuted the traditional belief that presently fills many Churches of Christ. Listen to Jesus as he discusses leadership—negative and positive:

> 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers (α[ρχοντë arcontes) of the Gentiles lord it over (κατακυριευψουσιν katakurieuousin) them, and their high officials exercise authority (κατεξουσιαψζουσιν katexousiazousin) over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (**Matthew 20:25-28**).

In seeking an answer to the word that is translated as "rule" in **Hebrews 13:17** by the KJV translators, one needs to analyze its usage in the Classical Greek age (900 BC to 300 BC), the Hellenistic biblical age (Septuagint [LXX], 270 BC to 250 BC), and the New Testament age.[85] Although the Classical Greek age sheds light upon the development of the word, still this is not a final criteria by which one determines how the writers in the New Testament employed the word. Ultimately the context is the deciding factor. The following is an example of the Classical, Hellenistic, and New Testament usages of the word ηΣγεψομαι Jegeomai:

Classical Greek Usage

In classical Greek, the ηΣγεμωψν Jegemwn was a "guide" who showed the way or "one who did a thing first."[86] The author of this particular article says, "In classical Greek a Jhghmon was a 'guide' who showed one the way or 'one who did a thing first.'" It might also be a "leader" in the army of a chief or king. Josephus used the word to describe a "procurator" or "prefect" (Antiquities 18.3.1).[87]

The verb form ηΣγεψομαι Jhgeomai carries the connotation of "lead, guide; think, consider, esteem, count."[88] This author further calls attention to the classical and New Testament usage of this word:

Classical Greek and Septuagint Usage

> There are two primary uses of this word: (1) "to lead, rule, guide" and (b) "to think, consider, esteem, count." In classical Greek Jhgeomai means "to lead" or "to guide," while in the Septuagint and in the New Testament it is used for ruling or leading. In two instances in the Apocrypha (1 Maccabees 9:30 and 2 Maccabees 14:16) Jhgeomai refers to military commanders. In the Septuagint and contemporary non-Christian sources this word is used for officials, princes, or governors.[89]

New Testament Usage

> In both classical sources and the New Testament, Jhgeomai can be used for leaders of a religious community (e.g., Acts 15:22; Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). The second meaning of the word can be seen in a variety of passages. In Acts 26:2; 2 Corinthians 9:5; Philippians 2:6; 2 Peter 1:13 it is translated "to think" or "thought." In Philippians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Hebrews 11:26 it is translated as "to esteem" or "esteeming." The word is rendered "suppose" in Philippians 2:25, "count" or "counted" in Philippians 3:7, 8; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; Hebrews 10:29; 2 Peter 2:13; 3:9. It can also be translated "judge," as in Hebrews 11:11, or they "that have rule over you" as in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.[90]

As one reads the above comments, one immediately realizes the necessity of consulting the context in making one's determination as to the meaning to assign to a particular word in a given context. This word is multifaceted in that it has many meanings. This author's last comments are taken from the KJV. This translation contradicts other Scriptures that refute this philosophy about Christian leaders as being rulers over God's new humanity. Translators are not immune from their own traditions and are not immune from the influence of other translations. The following citations are given in order to demonstrate that one of the nuances associated with this word is the concept of leading or guiding, which is closer to the New Testament use of this word in **Hebrews 13:17**. For instance, Liddell-Scott defines the noun ηΣγεμωψν jJhgemwn as "guide, leader, commander, and

chief."[91] They also define ηΣγεψομαι Jhgeomai as "to go before, lead the way."[92] William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich also give a diversity of meanings for this word Jhgeomai. But, in spite of this diversity, one discovers the basic meaning:

> 1. *lead, guide;* in our lit. only pres. ptc. (oJ) ηΣγουψμενö of men in any leading position (Soph., Phil. 386; freq. Polyb.; Diod. S. 1, 4, 72; Lucian, Alex. 44; 57.[93]

There are two occurrences of this Greek word in the Apocrypha that refers to military commanders:

So now we have chosen you today to take his place as our ruler (α[ρχοντα arconta) and leader (ηΣγουψμενον Jhgoumenon), to fight our battle (**1 Maccabees 9:30**).[94]

At the command of the leader (ηΣγουψμενου Jhgoumenou), they set out from there immediately and engaged them in battle at a village called Dessau.[95]

Hellenistic Biblical Usage (LXX)

As mentioned above, ηΣγεψομαι Jhgeomai in the classical age employed this term principally in the sense of "guide" or to "lead." On the other hand, the Septuagint (LXX) and the New Testament use this same word for "ruling" or "leading." Only the context determines the nuance to be attached, not etymology. A common error among interpreters is the etymologizing fallacy, that is to say, the historical information with contemporary usage. The etymology (evolution) of a word may help to discover its sense, but only if it can be confirmed that the writer was cognizant of that etymology. The following comments by Darrell L. Bock are insightful in word analysis:

Word meanings can be examined in two ways. First, words can be studied historically by examining how they have been used in the past and how they have changed in meaning through time. This is called *diachronic word analysis*, the approach of TDNT and NIDNT. These two reference tools examine a word's use beginning with the classical Greek period and continuing through the NT or even the patristic period. Examining words in this way indicates the possible senses that a term may have.

Second, words can also be studied within a given period (e.g., the intertestamental period, or pre—A.D. 70), or within the writings of a specific author (e.g., Paul, John, Matthew, Philo, or Josephus). This is called *synchronic word analysis* since the meaning of a word in its specific context, either temporal or literary, is the major concern of the exegete.[96]

The following quotes from the Old Testament illustrate the use of Jhgeomai in the sense of Master or king:

Then Micaiah answered, “I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘These people have no master (ηΣγουψμινον Jhgouminon = /w{da* a*don. Let each one go home in peace’” (**2 Chronicles 18:16**).

He said: “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name—neither they nor their kings—by their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings (ηΣγουψμενοι Jhgoumenoi = El#m# m#l#k) at their high places. [8] When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger. [9] Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings (ηΣγουψμενοι Jhgoumenoi = El#m# m#l#k), and I will live among them forever (**Ezekiel 43:7-9**).

All of the above illustrations demonstrate that etymology alone is not sufficient to determine the meaning that one should assign to a particular word; context is the deciding factor. The following extract from Black should explain why one should exercise caution in seeking to determine word meanings from etymology alone:

Summarizing, then, the etymological method, used alone, cannot adequately account for the meaning of a word since meaning is continuously subject to change. . . . Above all, to know what a word means we must consider its context. Meaning is then extracted from the passage in which the word is found. . . . This confusion of word and concept, Barr complains, is one of the chief faults of *Kittle’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT). In treating individual words as if they were concepts, it implies (correctly) that the words themselves contain the various theological meanings assigned to them. But the meaning of words, as we have seen, is determined from the way they are used in context. These larger literary contexts, and not words, are the real linguistic carriers of theological meaning.[97]

If one wishes to understand the words peiqw and Jhgeomai in **Hebrews 13:17**, one must consult the context as well as other parallel passages that deal with leadership. The word that is usually translated as “rule over you” is looked at once more under the caption “Hellenistic Biblical Usage (New Testament)” in order to demonstrate the versatility of this word.

Hellenistic Biblical Usage (New Testament)

In both classical sources and the New Testament, Jhgeomai can be used for leaders of a religious community, not just rulers or governors. For

example, consider the choosing of certain men to go with Paul and Barnabas among the brethren following the council meeting at Jerusalem. In the following account, one discovers the same word as employed by the author of Hebrews applied by Luke to two individuals that were leaders within the Christian community:

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders (ηΣγουμεψνοϋ jJhgoumenous[98]) among the brothers (**Acts 15:22**).

Remember your leaders (ηΣγουμεψνων jJhgoumenwn[99]), who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. [8] Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (**Hebrews 13:7**).

Obey your leaders (ηΣγουμεψνοϊ Jegoumenois[100]) and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (**Hebrews 13:17**).

Greet all your leaders (ηΣγουμεψνοϋ Jegoumenous[101]) and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings (**Hebrews 13:24**).

As stated above, one observes that the Greek word ηΣγεψομαι Jegeomai is varied in its meanings. The context is the deciding factor. The KJV's translation of this Greek word in **Hebrews 13: 7** and **17** contradicts Jesus' plain statement to His disciples about rulers in the world and the disciples' relationship to one another as servants. But to illustrate this point of diversity in meaning, one only has to consult other Scriptures. The following Scriptures demonstrate the variable use of Jegeomai.

> But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers (ηΣγεμοψσιν Jegemosin, "governors") of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler (ηΣγουψμενö Jegoumenos, "governor"[102]) [**Matthew 2:6**].

> Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. [25] Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over (κυριευψουσιν kurieuousin) them; and those who exercise authority (εξξουσιαψζοντë exousiazontes) over them call themselves Benefactors. [26] But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules (ηΣγουψμενö Jegoumenos,

"governing" or "leading"[103]) like the one who serves (**Luke 22:24-26**).

"King Agrippa, I consider (ηΣγημαι Jhghmai, "think" or "to regard"[104]) myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, [3] and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently (**Acts 26:2-3**).

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider (ηΣγηψσατο Jhghsato, "deemed"[105]) equality with God something to be grasped, [7] but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (**Philippians 2:6**).

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered (ηΣγηψσατο Jhghsato) me faithful, appointing me to his service (**1 Timothy 1:12**).

The KJV translates the above Scriptures respectively: **Acts 15:22**, "chief"; **Hebrew 13:7**, "which have the rule over you' **Hebrews 13:17**, "that have the rule over you"; **Hebrews 13:24**, "that have the rule over you"; **Matthew 2:6**, "Governor"; **Luke 22:26**, "chief"'; **Acts 26:2**, "think"; **Philippians 2:6**, "thought; and **1 Timothy 1:12**, "counted." On the other hand, the RSV translated the above Scriptures respectively: **Acts 15:22**, "leading men"; **Hebrews 13:7**, "leaders"; **Hebrews 13:17**, "leaders"; **Hebrews 13:24**, "leaders"' **Matthew 2:6**, "rulers" and "ruler"; **Luke 22:26**, "leader"; **Acts 26:2**, "think"; **Philippians 2:6**, "count"; and **1 Timothy 1:12**, "judged." One can see at a glance the latitude that translators have in seeking to convey the original. The following comments by F. Buschsel also illustrates the diversity of meanings found in the word Jegeomai:

1. This word means a. "to lead," b. "to think," "believe," "regard as." In the NT it occurs in sense a. only in the present participle (see 2) . . . 2. a. Jhgoumenoi (mostly plural) is used for community leaders in Heb. 13:7, 17, 24. These are example of faith (v. 7) and pastors responsible to God (v.17); they are thus to be obeyed (v. 17), and are mentioned before the saints (v. 24). Yet according to Lk. 22:26 the Jhgoumenos is the one who serves—a necessary check on officialdom. Judas and Silas are called "leading men" among the brethren in Acts 15:22.[106]

It seems, at least from the context, that the best translation of the three occurrences of this word (Jhgeomai) in **Hebrews**, **chapter 13**, is best translated as "the ones leading you." The basic concept is "to lead," "to guide"; it is not "to rule." Dictatorship or "exercising lordship over" is automatically ruled out because of what Jesus spoke to His disciples concerning their relationship to one another (see **Matthew 20:25-28**). Since

these Scriptures (**Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24**) do not identify "the ones leading you," one may surmise that these could be evangelists, teachers, and teaching pastors (elders—older men). This obedience to their "leaders," or "guides" come about by "feeling," not "coercion." One must interpret the text of **Hebrews 13** as it is written; one must not force an unnatural meaning to the text in order to force the traditional opinion of certain men as rulers within the company of the redeemed. Ray Stedman's lengthy comments are worth citing as he calls attention to the KJV's translation of the Greek word, Jhgeomai:

> In 13:7, the author recalled to his reader's minds the influence for good left by mentors who were now gone. In verse 17, he urges respect for and compliance with the godly leaders they now have. This verse, along with 1 Thessalonians 5:12, has been widely misunderstood because of the faulty translation of the KJV, NIV and other versions. The words obey (twice here) and submit and the phrase from 1 Thessalonians 5:12 "are over you in the Lord" have often fueled a harmful authoritarianism that has turned pastors into autocrats and congregations into personal domains. Such a twisted view of authority ignores entirely Jesus' words to the disciples: "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you: but whoever would be great among you must be your servant." (Mk 10:42-43, RSV). . . . Perhaps those words, "it shall not be so among you," have been among the most ignored sayings of Jesus within the churches. Wherever leadership views itself as having God-given authority to impose rules or limitations on individual Christians or a congregation without their willing consent, these words of Jesus are being violated. Warnings against "lording it over the brethren" are given in 2 Corinthians 1:24 by Paul, in 1 Peter 5:3 by Peter, and in 3 John 9-10 by John. . . . The author's basis for urging his readers to give willing response to their leaders is that the leaders are godly men who feel deeply their responsibility to lead wisely and lovingly as men who must give an account. This account must be given, not to the congregation, but to the Lord (1 Pet. 5:2-4).[107]

Unfortunately, today the English word *obey* is saddled with antibiblical nuances. It appears that the KJV conveys the ideas, concepts, notions, and presuppositions of the men behind the King James Version rather than the nuances intended by the author of Hebrews. Instead of translating the Greek participles—Jhgoumenwn (**v. 7**), Jhgoumenois (**v. 17**), Jhgoumenous (**v. 24**)—as "rule over you" (**vv. 7, 17, 24**, KJV), it would be more accurate to translate these participles as the "ones leading you."[108] As stated above, the Greek text is simply: τοῖ ηΣγουμενψων tois Jhgoumenwn (v. 7), τοῖ ηΣγουμεψνοϊ tois Jhgoumenois (**v. 17**), and τοῖ ηΣγουμεψνοϋ tois Jhgoumenous (**v. 24**). All of these participles simply mean: "the ones leading you." What is conspicuously absent in all three verses are the words: (1) κατακυριευψω katakurieuw ["lord it over"], and

(2) κατεξουσιαψζω katexiysuazw ["have authority over"]. It is quite obvious that the translators of the KJV were guilty of smuggling into the text an alien idea to help the "cult of the bishops." The KJV's translation of these three verses in Hebrews is at variance with the teaching of Jesus (see **Matthew 20:25-28; 23:1-11**).

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENT IN TRANSLATIONS

The Verb "To Run"

What meaning should one attach to the word peiqw? The context is the deciding factor in seeking to determine the exact shade of meaning to be assigned to any particular word. Interpretive clues to the meaning of a word in a particular passage are found in the context. If, for example, someone uses the word *run* in a sentence, how does one go about interpreting the monosyllable word? One can almost hear the cry—context, context, and context. Yes, the context would be the determining factor in one uncovering the meaning.

Beekman and Callow add helpful insights to the word *run*. They develop the problems that translators run into when they seek to find the "dynamic equivalent"[109] in another language. These two scholars illustrate the difficulties that translators encounter with "dynamic equivalent" through the word *run*. The following is a powerful statement that calls attention to the dilemma:

> "To run" also has a wide range of "prepositional collocations, such as "run out of the house," run for office," "run into trouble," "run over a child," "run below average." No other word has this particular collocational range in English. . . . However, many of the collocations permissible for run in English are not permissible in Chol—Chol noses do not run, nor do their stockings, jellies, or motors. They do not run for office, or into debt, or trouble, or out of money or time or patience.[110]

Again, the context is the deciding factor in one's seeking to understand the exact shade of meaning to be assigned to any particular word. Interpretive clues are generally provided by the context, which helps one to determine the meaning of a given word in a particular passage. If, for example, someone uses the word *run* in a sentence, the question that confronts everyone is: how should one interpret the word *run*? Yet again, the context would be the deciding factor. To illustrate this principle still further, one should take note of the word *run* in the following quote:

> Each word in a language has a unique collocational[111] range, both qualitatively, in its selections, and quantitatively, in the number of possible collocations. Some words can collocate with only one generic class, or even only certain member of it; others can collocate widely. For instance, the verb "to run" collocates with several generic classes—humans, animals (with legs),

> liquids, garments, for example—as subject, whereas the verb "to mew" only collocates with cats and certain birds, such as gulls and hawks, which have a cry like the mewing of a cat. "To run" also has a wide range of "prepositional" collocations, such as "run out of the house," "run for office," "run into trouble," "run over a child," "run below average." No other word has this particular collocation range in English.[112]

This citation is given in order to illustrate the wide range of meaning attached to the verb "run." As one reflects upon the verb "run," it is apparent that any definition assigned to any word depends on the context. This, too, is also true of the Greek word peiqw, which also has a variety of meanings. It is true that one definition of this word is "obey," but, as previously pointed out, W. E. Vine correctly calls attention to the nuance to be attached to this word: "The "obedience" suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion."[113] It goes almost without saying that every definition hinges upon context. If one fails to take into consideration the intent of the author, then one violates sound principles of hermeneutics. Once more, what meaning should one attach to the Greek word peiqw?

Again, context is the final appeal to determine the meaning to be assigned to any word. It is not uncommon for a range of concepts to be imbedded within a single word. To arrive at a correct interpretation of a particular word, one must analyze the "bundles of components of meaning" (that is to say, the number and selection of meaning components combined in a word) and "semantic perspective" (that is to say, the semantic interrelationships that may exist between different words). Since words are semantically complex, it is often necessary to "unpack" the bundle of components when translating. This tactic ensures that the sense of the word in a given passage is not distorted. This paper seeks, through examples, to "unpack" the various Greek words employed by the author of Hebrews. Through an examination of the evolution of certain words found in this much abused text (**Hebrews 13:17**), one should be able to arrive at a correct understanding of the author's intended meaning.

The Verb "To Dress

Another illustration concerns the verb "to dress," which has several senses. Just a quick glance at some of the ways in which this verb form is employed is quite striking. Again, Beekman and Callow illustrate with extreme clarity the problems that translators frequently incur in seeking ways to express the multiple use of words in some languages:

> To dress timber
> To dress ranks
> To dress poultry
> To dress a wound
> To dress a salad
> To dress a shop window

To dress oneself[114]

The following excerpt from the writings of Rudolph Bultmann explains the complexity that scholars face in searching for the exact word or phrase to translate a particular Greek word:

> c. πειθοψμεθα in Hb. 13:18 (vl. πεποιψθαμεν) means "we are convinced"; this is also the meaning of πειψθομαι in Herm.s., 8, 11, 12. Ac. 26:26 is weaker: λανθαψνειν γαΨρ αυςτοΨν τουψτων ους πειψθομαι ουςθεψν, "I believe that none of these things can be unknown to him." The perf. especially has the sense "I am convinced" in Lk. 20:6; R. 8:38; 14:14 (οἰδα και· πεψπεισμαι); 15:14; 2 Tm. 1:5, 12; Hb. 6:9; Ign.Tr., 3, 2; Ign. Pol., 2, 3; Pol., 9, 2; Barn., 1, 4. The pass. aor. πεισθη§ναι is used similarly, cf. Ac. 5:40 after Gamaliel's speech: εςπειψσθησαν δε· αυςτω`/, "they were persuaded by him" or "they followed him." πειψθεσθαι, like πεισθη§ναι, can often mean "to be won over by persuasion," "to follow," Ac. 21:14; 23:21; 27:11; Ign.R., 7, 2; Herm.m., 12, 3, 3. In Lk. 16:31 following is almost obeying; here the ουςδε; … πεισθηψσονται, which corresponds to the preceding oujk ajkouvousin, is best translated: "they will not let themselves be told." The meaning can be "to obey" in, e.g., Hb. 13:17: πειψθεσθε τοι§ ηΣγουμεψνοϊ υΣμω§ν και· υΣπειψκετε, Jm. 3:3, of horses which obey the bit, and esp. R. 2:8: toi`" … πειθομεψνοϊ τη§ αςδικιψα/, where the antithesis toi`" … αςπειθου§σι τη§ αςληθειψα/ makes the sense perfectly clear. So also Gl. 5:7: αςληθειψά μη· πειψθεσθαι (occasionally interpolated into 3:1 as well). πειψθονται τοι§ ωΣρισμεψνοϊ νοψμοϊ occurs in Dg., 5, 10.[115]

Bultmann is correct in calling attention to the correctness, in some contexts, of translating the Greek word πειψθεσθε peiqesqe, ("to be persuaded," **Hebrews 13:17**) as "to obey." Even if one translates this Greek word peiqesqe[116] as "obey," and not as "be persuaded," the question that still confronts everyone is this: Are Christians to render blind obedience to the requirements of the so-called ruling elders? These leaders that Paul mentions that Christians are to listen to had to do with bringing one's life into harmony with the ethical standards of Christianity and not reverting back to the Law as a means of one's right standing before God. But this is not the situation today.

CULTURAL CLASH

Not only should interpreters consider *diachronic[117]* word analysis (The examination of words studied historically by examining how they have been used in the past and how they have changed in meaning through time.), but should also consider "cultural clash" in one's examination of any text. A "cultural clash" is not a collocational clash (Collocational clashes are lexical

combinations with components of meaning that are not compatible.). In other words, for instance, the following sentence is grammatically correct, but, at the same time, it contains four lexical collocations: "I never have heard a green horse smoke a dozen oranges." An example of this phenomenon is the communion narratives reported by both Matthew (**26:20**) and Luke (**22:14**). Both authors employ the Greek word for "recline" (αςψναψκειμαι anakeimai), not "sat" as employed in the KJV. Why did the KJV use "to sit" rather than "to recline"?

In all likelihood the translators saw a cultural problem here, since reclining was/is not the position in the English-speaking world for eating. Yet, reclining is a historical reference to the cultural practice of that day. In spite of the cultural practice, the translators substituted "sat down" for "reclining," which actually misrepresents what in point of fact took place. [118] This perception also sheds light upon the translators rendering of **Hebrews 13:17** to give absolute authority to the cultural practice observed in King James' day—"obey" the dictatorial polices of the king and his bishops. In other words, it was culturally right to consider King James as the head of the church. Thus, one finds the wording, "obey them that have the rule over you" to coincide with the times, not the original intent of the author, that is to say, a blind obedience to the leaders. In spite of King James and his bishops' political philosophy, this passage is still cited by many sincere godly leaders as justification for their dictatorial policies for absolute submission to whatever they dictate the Scriptures to teach.

JAMES 3:3 VERSUS HEBREWS 13:17

Some individuals latch onto Bultmann's comments on the use of πειψθω peiqw in James 3:3, which reads: "When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us (πειψθεσθαι peiqesqai[119]), we can turn the whole animal." In the above quote by Bultmann, one cannot disagree with him that the best translation for **James 3:3** concerning the bit, or bridle, in the horse's mouth is best translated "to obey." Although the "bit" persuaded the horse, nevertheless, the final result is that the horse obeyed. But does this Scripture citation justify translating the Greek word in **Hebrews 13:17** with the same denotation (a direct specific meaning as distinct from an implied or associated idea), that is, the same meaning as employed in **James 3:3**? Is blind obedience the focal point of the Greek word peiqw in **Hebrews 13:17**? Do leaders put "bits" in the mouths of its members and then pull the reins in order to make one obey? Are the saints "horses" to be whipped into line at the whims of a few men?

The question that confronts everyone is: What were those Christians to obey? Once more, one must emphasize that the context is the answer to this apparently misunderstood Scripture. **Hebrews 13** reveals that they were (1) to continue in brotherly love [**v.1**]; (2) to practice hospitality to strangers [**v.2**]; (3) to minister to the prisoners [**v. 4**]; (4) to honor the marriage bed [**v.4**]; (5) to be content with possessions [**vv. 5-6**]; (6) to respect faithful leaders [**vv. 7, 17**]; and, (7) to imitate the behavior of their leaders [**v. 7**]. This kind of obedience and submission advanced by the author of Hebrews

is a far cry from the "popery" that is generally practiced by many leaders today within the various splinter groups within the warring factions of the Churches of Christ.

Abnormal Interpretation of James 3:3

A former professor of mine recently cited **James 3:3** in which he spoke of horses that obey the "bit" in their mouths. This Christian brother alluded to this Scripture to justify "blind obedience" to a board of directors—called elders. This Scripture was mentioned to give validity to the current interpretation—absolute control by the elders—of **Hebrews 13:17**. As I listened to this sincere believer, one could not help but wonder if this passage (**James 3:3**) teaches that the congregation represents "horses" and that the elders are the "riders" and the "bits" are placed in the mouths of the congregation by the elders in order to force obedience to their dictates. One must keep in mind that the mere definition of a word does not necessarily define that particular word in its own context. The framework of the Scripture must also be consulted. How does one go about determining the particular meaning to attach to a particular word? Perhaps, the words of Thomas Hartwell Horne goes a long way in one's uncovering the meaning that one should attach to a particular word. Horne is correct when he writes:

> Although, in interpreting words that have various meanings, some degree may exist as to which of their different senses is to be preferred; yet the ambiguity in such cases is not so great, but that it may in general be removed, and the proper signification of the passage in question may be determined; for the SUBJECT MATTER—that is, the topic of which the author is treating—plainly shows the sense which is to be attached to any particular word.[120]

Another author, L. Berkhof, stresses the necessity of consulting parallel passages in seeking to determine the meaning of a given context. He has correctly observed the importance of comparison of parallel texts:

> It is possible that neither the etymology of a word, nor the connection in which it is found, are sufficient to determine its exact meaning. In such cases, it is of paramount significance to study parallel passages, in which the same word is found in a similar connection, or in reference to the same general subject. Each passage consulted must, of course, be studied in its connection. . . . Moreover, it is necessary that the phrase or expression that calls for explanation be clearer in one passage than it is in the other, for it is impossible to explain an obscure passage by one that is equally dark. It is hardly necessary to remark in this connection that the interpreter should carefully guard against the mistake of trying to illustrate a perfectly clear passage by one that is less perspicuous.[121]

PROPER USE OF LEXICAL AIDS

A word of caution is appropriate in the use of lexicons when one is seeking to understand the meaning of a word or words. Why is there such difficulty in translation of these passages (**vv. 7 &17**)? An exact translation is not always an easy task, not even for scholars. For the beginning student of Greek, a word of caution is in order concerning lexical studies. Even though one must utilize lexical aids, nevertheless, one must understand that the lexicographer also assumes to some extent the role of an exegete when he defines words in a given context. Joseph Henry Thayer explains the difficulties involved in translation this way:

> The nature and use of the New Testament writings require that the lexicographer should not be hampered by a too rigid adherence to the rules of scientific lexicography. A student often wants to know not so much the inherent meaning of a word as the particular sense it bears in a given context, or discussion:—or, to state the same truth from another point of view, the lexicographer often cannot assign a particular New Testament reference to one or another of the acknowledged significations of a word without indicating his exposition of the passage in which the reference occurs. In such a case he is compelled to assume, at least to some extent, the functions of the exegete, although he can and should refrain from rehearsing the general arguments which support the interpretation adopted, as well as from arraying the objections to opposing interpretations.[122]

David Allen Black's book dealing with linguistics is extremely helpful for an individual to arrive at a more correct comprehension of the author's intended meaning. He correctly says, "The easiest way to learn the principal terms in rhetoric is to study them with an example and, where applicable, a comparison with related terms."[123] Again, this writer is on target when he writes about "rhetorical language," that is to say, a language that must be interpreted in a way that does not contradict the intent of the author. This consciousness of idioms (The language peculiar to a people or to a district, community, or class.) helps one to understand the text more clearly. He correctly writes:

> Discussion of idioms brings up the related matter of the consciousness and intention of the speaker. Not only do words mean many things to many people; they are also frequently charged with rhetorical connotations that sometimes say more than their lexical denotations. Thinking of meaning only in terms of lexical or syntactic items can easily lead to disregard for the crucial role of rhetorical features as signs having meaning for receptors.[124]

TWO WORDS SIMILAR IN MEANING:

OBEY (ΥϚΠΑΚΟΥΨΩ) AND PERSUASION (ΠΕΙΨΘΩ)

To illustrate a little more forcefully the intent of the author of

Hebrews, an examination of another word that is also translated "obey" (υΣπακουψω Jupakouw) should assist one in discovering the various nuances to attach to a particular word in translation. Although the word Jupakouw is a synonym[125] to peiqw, jJupakouw seems to be the stronger of the two words. Peiqw carries within its meaning the idea of "persuasion," whereas Jupakouw carries within its meaning the idea of "to listen or give ear to," which is still closely related to the word *persuasion*. Even though the two words carry similar concepts, yet they are not identical in meaning.

Obey: υΣπακουψω Jupakouw

The Greek word Jupakouw is from the preposition υΣποψ Jupo ("under, by, by means of, about, subject to") and αςκουψω akouw ("hear, heed, listen, understand, learn, give, a hearing"). This word occurs approximately twenty-one times in the New Testament, eleven of which are attributed to Paul. A more accurate interpretation of this word can be gained by an examination of texts that employ the same expression. The following Scripture citations give one a feel for this particular word:

> The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey (υΣπακουψουσιν j&upakouousin[126]) him!" (**Matthew 8:27**).
>
> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey (υΣπακουψειν jJuakouein[127]) its evil desires (**Romans 6:12**).
>
> Children, obey (υΣπακουψετε Jupakouete[128]) your parents in the Lord, for this is right (**Ephesians 6:1**).
>
> Slaves, obey (υΣπακουψετε Jupakouete[129]) your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord (**Colossians 3:22**).
>
> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey (υΣπακουψουσιν Jupakouousin[130]) the gospel of our Lord Jesus (**2 Thessalonians 1:8**).
>
> By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed (υΣπηψκουσεν Juhkousen [131]) and went, even though he did not know where he was going (**Hebrews 11:8**).

From the above Scriptures, it is noteworthy that the Greek word meaning "persuasion" is not the underlying connotation (The suggesting of a meaning by a word apart from the thing it explicitly names or describes.), or undertone. As one reflects upon **Matthew 8:27**, one quickly observes that the winds were not persuaded to obey Him. In the other five Scripture

citations, one also discovers that out-and-out obedience is the thrust of the various statements, not persuasion. To illustrate the nuances between the words peiqw (persuade or win over) and Jupakouw (obey), one's attention is called to children's obedience to parents. For example, before children are mature in judgment, the father or the mother may say, "You must obey (Jupakouw) my voice." In other words, there are no "ifs," "ands," or "buts" about it. One simply submits, no persuasion (in its strictest sense). On the other hand, if one's child is a teenager, then the father or the mother may seek to get the child to obey (peiqw) with logic.

Through reason, the teenager is persuaded to pursue a particular course of action. Both were submissive (younger and older), but from different perspectives. One may seek to persuade (peiqw) his/her child to follow a specific path that would be advantageous for the child. Yet, having said this, it is not "You obey (Jupakouw) my voice," but rather, the parents seeks to "persuade" the child to obedience. Persuasion (peiqw) is the best method to use to entice one to good performance, that is to say, persuasion that is based on what is in the best interest of the child. The tactic of persuasion is much more effective if the father or the mother are following their own advice of practicing what they want their teenagers to adhere to. So it is with the "obedience" in **Hebrews 13:17**. No one objects to submission (υΣπειψκετε Jupeikete, "you submit"[132]) to holy men who encourage holy living. The leaders alluded to in **Hebrews 13:17** were practicing what they were seeking to persuade others to follow.

This submission is not submission to the abnormal interpretation of certain Scriptures by mind controllers (some elders, some preachers, and some editors of religious journals). Everyone must "obey," or "be persuaded" to put into practice ethical behavior that will honor God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This obedience is exactly what Paul calls attention to in his first letter to the Corinthians:

> Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— [33] even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. [1] Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ (**1 Corinthians 10:32-33**).

Obedience to Holiness: Peiqw (Persuaded)

Everyone must "obey" in this sense of adherence to holiness, that is, everyone must "be persuaded" to imitate Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. As one seeks to capture the import of these two words, perhaps, the comments by W. E. Vine concerning the distinction between Jupakouw and peiqw will assist one in placing the proper interpretation upon the author of Hebrews. Vine's definitions are quite illuminating and to the point:

> HUPAKOUOM (υΣπακουψω , (5219)), to listen, attend (as in Acts 12:13), and so, to submit, to obey, is used of obedience (*a*) to

God, Heb. 5:9; 11:8; (*b*) to Christ, by natural elements, Matt. 8:27; Mark 1:27; 4:41; Luke 8:25; (*c*) to disciples of Christ, Luke 17:6; (*d*) to the faith, Acts 6:7; the Gospel, Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8; Christian doctrine, Rom. 6:17 (as to a form or mould of teaching); (*e*) to apostolic injunctions, Phil. 2:12; 2 Thess. 3:14; (*f*) to Abraham by Sarah, 1 Pet. 3:6; (*g*) to parents by children, Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; (*h*) to masters by servants, Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; (*i*) to sin, Rom. 6:12; (*j*) in general, Rom. 6:16.[133]

PEITHOM (πειψθω , (3982)), to persuade, to win over, in the Passive and Middle Voices, to be persuaded, to listen to, to obey, is so used with this meaning, in the Middle Voice, e.g., in Acts 5:36, 37 (in ver. 40, Passive Voice, "they agreed"); Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 3:3. The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion. "*Peithomμ* and *pisteuomμ,* 'to trust,' are closely related etymologically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter, cp. Heb. 3:18, 19, where the disobedience of the Israelites is said to be the evidence of their unbelief. Faith is of the heart, invisible to men; obedience is of the conduct and may be observed. When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes God. Of course it is persuasion of the truth that results in faith (we believe because we are persuaded that the thing is true, a thing does not become true because it is believed), but *peithomμ,* in N.T. suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persuasion and consequent faith" (The underscored sentence is mine—RDB)[134]

Just a casual reading of Vine's definitions reveals the distinctions that exist between the two words. On the one hand, Jupakouw is more the concept of "obey," but, on the other hand, peiqw is more of the concept of "persuasion." His comments on peiqw fits the context of **Hebrews 13:1-17**. The "obedience' in **Hebrews 13: 7** and **17** results from one's persuasion through the influence, guidance, and exhortation of the religious leaders, not through dictatorial authority. Why were the believers exhorted to "be persuaded" by their leaders? As stated above, **verse 7** holds the key: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." The "leading ones" (ηΣγουμεψνων Jgoumenwn) were holy men and men "full of faith." Christians were to be influenced by the leader's life style. This obedience is not from irrational adherence to a certain group of men or leaders' life styles., but rather the submission is to the lifestyle of men who imitate Christ. Ray Stedman is perfectly right when he writes:

Several things should be noted about Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12. The word "obey" comes from the Greek peiqw, "to persuade." The present imperative middle form, used here, means "permit oneself to be persuaded," yield to

> persuasion." It definitely does not mean to blindly follow orders. The phrase "those who are over you in the Lord" should simply be "your leaders in the Lord." There is no thought of being "over" anyone, or other being "under" a leader. The authority of a Christian leader is not command authority, but servant leadership. A servant has authority, as Jesus said he had, because he awakens by his living service a desire to comply. Or he is persuasive because of his logic or knowledge.[135]

Hearing God More Accurately in Hebrews 13:17

How can one make an intelligent interpretation of the word *obey* in **Hebrews 13:17**? The answer is the context. One must never seek to interpret a passage in isolation from its context. Even though this rule is a basic principle of hermeneutics, nevertheless, this essential rule is frequently overlooked in one's investigation into the meaning of a particular word. Powerful leaders frequently have difficulty in hearing God's Word accurately. It is not uncommon for the religious leaders' interpretation to become normative and then to be passed on to the members of the congregation as authoritative. The traditions of the church concerning **Hebrews 13:17** still make it difficult, if not impossible, for many Christians to read the Word of God accurately. So many Christians, including professors in religious institutions, are so used to reading the Bible as they have been taught by generations of interpreters that it is almost impossible to dig out the underbrush that prevents sound interpretation. Having said this, one must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret a sacred text that has been handed down by the church fathers. The words of Jimmy Allen about context is on target:

> A word must be defined in the light of its context. A text taken out of context is a pretext. . . . Context takes priority over everything else in determining word meanings.[136]

THE TEXT SERVES AS A WINDOW FOR CORRECT INTERPRETATION

Frequently, believers do word studies without considering the language used or the background of the passage before drawing a conclusion as to the meaning of the word(s) employed by the author. If one is to do sound exegesis, then one must have a considerable grasp of many issues, which includes historical events in order to understand adequately the dialogues in Scripture. Since the individuals to whom the documents were intended were generally competent to manage such a discourse, the interpreter must place himself within the setting of the receivers of the document. Again, the context must be consulted. The text serves as a window through which one peers into the historical period. For one to ignore the setting, or framework, is to decontexualize[137] the wording of the author.

In order to interpret the Scriptures correctly, the exegete must have a background for biblical interpretation. In other words, there must be a set of standard principles, methods, and procedures for explaining accurately the meaning of the text. One of the best ways to gain this kind of information is to consult commentaries and Bible dictionaries. These books should assist one in a more exact interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, one ought to be conscious that a head count of translations, commentaries, and dictionaries do not determine the meaning, but rather they do assist one in focusing on context in order to arrive at a more faithful explanation of the text. One should not violate the author's Spirit-given sovereignty in his choice of words. One ought to allow the context to control his/her theological conception.

In the development of one's studies concerning definitions, one is obligated to keep in mind that there is no such thing as an original meaning apart from specific contextual settings. Far too many believers participate in illegitimate etymological studies.[138] With this perception of contextual studies, the question is: What meaning should one attach to the Greek word peiqw as employed by the author of Hebrews? Is it "persuasion" or is it "obey." One cannot deny, as stated earlier, that obedience is expected from the believers, but this obedience is not blind obedience to rulers. The basic concept of the word employed by the author is "persuasion." Some sincere Christians have latched on to the English word "obey" in order to whip people into obedience to their concept of authority figures. This word is employed in such a way as to give credence to fit their (elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals) own agenda—the molding of one's thinking. Once more, as cited above, one would do well to consult Rudolph Bultmann as he argues convincingly as to the true import of peiqw:

> 1. πειψθω in the Active (apart from the Perfect).
>
> a. The act. πειψθειν is used in the NT in the customary senses, not always sharply differentiated, which are found in Gk. usage from the time of Homer: "to convince," "to persuade," "to seduce (by persuasion)," "to corrupt." The meaning "to convince" occurs in Plat.Resp., I, 327c; Thuc., III, 31, "to persuade" in Hom.Il., 9, 345; Plat.Resp., II, 364b, "to seduce" in Hom.Il., 6, 360, "to corrupt" in Hdt., VIII, 134; Lys., 21, 10. Indicative of the role of peivqein among the Gks. is the personification of Πειθωψ as a deity, e.g., Hes.Op., 73; Theog., 349. Whereas in Hom. peivqein appears only in the "determinative" sense "to persuade successfully," "to convince," in the period which follows the pres. usually expresses intention and the aor. success, though the context decides.[139]
>
> 2. πειψθομαι.
>
> a. In the NT, as in Gk., peivqomai means first "to trust," "to rely on" (Hom.Od., 20, 45; Hdt., VII, 144 [tw`/ qew`/ !]), also "to be convinced, persuaded" (Soph.Phil., 624; Plat.Prot., 388a), consequently also "to believe" (Hdt., I, 8; Plat.Ap., 25e) or "to

follow" (Xen.An., VII, 3, 39) (in the sense "to be tractable"); this sense "to follow" can even have the further meaning "to obey" (Hom.Il., 1, 79; Soph.Ant., 67; Plat.Ap., 29d: πειψσομαι δε· μα§λλον τω§ θεω§ η] υΣμι§ν).[140]

c. πειθοψμεθα in Hb. 13:18 (vl. πεποιψθαμεν) means "we are convinced"; this is also the meaning of peivqomai in Herm.s., 8, 11, 12. Ac. 26:26 is weaker: λανθαψνειν γαΨρ αυςτοΨν τουψτων ους πειψθομαι ουςθεψν, "I believe that none of these things can be unknown to him." The perf. especially has the sense "I am convinced" in Lk. 20:6; R. 8:38; 14:14 (οὶδα και· πεψπεισμαι); 15:14; 2 Tm. 1:5, 12; Hb. 6:9; Ign.Tr., 3, 2; Ign. Pol., 2, 3; Pol., 9, 2; Barn., 1, 4. The pass. aor. πεισθη§ναι is used similarly, cf. Ac. 5:40 after Gamaliel's speech: εςπειψσθησαν δε· αυςτω`/, "they were persuaded by him" or "they followed him." πειψθεσθαι, like peisqh`nai, can often mean "to be won over by persuasion," "to follow," Ac. 21:14; 23:21; 27:11; Ign.R., 7, 2; Herm.m., 12, 3, 3. In Lk. 16:31 following is almost obeying; here the ουςδε; … πεισθηψσονται, which corresponds to the preceding ουςκ αςκουψουσιν, is best translated: "they will not let themselves be told." The meaning can be "to obey" in, e.g., Hb. 13:17: πειψθεσθε τοι§ ηΣγουμεψνοϊ υΣμω§ν και· υΣπειψκετε, Jm. 3:3, of horses which obey the bit, and esp. R. 2:8: τοι§ … πειθομεψνοϊ τη§ αςδικιψα/, where the antithesis τοι§ … αςπειθου§σι τη§ αςληθειψα/ makes the sense perfectly clear. So also Gl. 5:7: αςληθειψά μη· πειψθεσθαι (occasionally interpolated into 3:1 as well). πειψθονται τοι§ ωΣρισμεψνοϊ νοψμοϊ occurs in Dg., 5, 10.[141]

One cannot disagree with Bultmann in his translation of peiqw as "obey," but, at the same time, one must also take cognizance of the nuance behind the Greek word employed by the author of Hebrews—"be persuaded." The underlying meaning of this word is "persuasion" that is exercised on the part of the believer to a life of holiness that is in conformity with biblical faith. This obedience is submission to holy living, not to the interpretation of fallible men as if they were infallible interpreters. The traditional interpretation contradicts Jesus' statement to the apostles in their arguments concerning who was the greatest (see above **Matthew 20:25-28**).

These two Scriptures (**Hebrews 13:17**; **Matthew 20:25-28**) do not contradict one another. But, if one interprets **Hebrews 13:17** with a wooden literalness—without regard to context—then one finds an apparent contradiction in the English text. When two Scriptures come into conflict, the obscure must be interpreted in light of the clear, not the reverse. In **Hebrews**, one has a dark passage (**13:17**), if taken in isolation from its context. Yet, on the other hand, one discovers a light passage in **Matthew 20:25-28**. If one interprets the Greek words peiqw and Jhgomai respectively

as "obey" and "rule over you," then this translation contradicts the words of Jesus to His disciples as recorded by Matthew (**20:25-28** and **23:8-11**). But, on the other hand, if one translates the Greek words as "be persuaded by the ones leading you," then this translation does not contradict the plain teachings of Jesus in Matthew.

To illustrate and to assist one in a correct interpretation, or understanding, of the passages in **Hebrews** (**13:7** & **17**), then one should consult Matthew—pardon the repetition—as he records one of the last speeches of Jesus, shortly before His crucifixion. In this pericope, Jesus reacted to those who desired to elevate themselves to places of preeminence. An analysis of this unit in the Matthean passage should shed some light on the proper exegesis of **Hebrews 13:17**. Listen to the words of Jesus as He addresses a group of religious leaders that desire the limelight:

> But you are not to be called 'Rabbi' (ρΣαββιψ Jrabbi), for you have only one Master (διδψαψσκαλö didaskalos) and you are all brothers. [9] And do not call anyone on earth 'father' (πατηψρ pathr), for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. [10] Nor are you to be called 'teacher' (καθηγηταιψ kaqhgatai "leaders"), for you have one Teacher, the Christ. [11] The greatest among you will be your servant. [12] For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (**Matthew 23:8-12**).

Jesus absolutely refuses His disciples the use of "rabbi," "teacher," or even "father" to be employed as titles to distinguish themselves from other believers. He did not want any of the disciples to elevate themselves above others. No one was allowed to adopt the terms "Rabbi," "master" (teacher), or "father" as epithets to separate or distinguish themselves from one another. Why? Listen to Jesus as He responds: "You are all brothers" (**23:8**).

Christians frequently cite Scriptures that appear, at first glance, to sustain their position of individuals exercising authority over other individuals. One such example is the citation of **Titus 2:15**. The professor, mentioned above, that cited **James 3:3** to try to provide evidence that the word peiqw in **Hebrews 13:17** has the same connotation also cited **Titus 2:15** to show that Titus was to exercise "authority" (KJV) over those to whom he labored. In this passage, Paul wrote: "These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority (παψσϊ εςπιταγή' pashs epigaghs, "all command"). Do not let anyone despise you."

But, is this the meaning (authority over others) that one is to attach to the Greek word that is translated as "authority." The idea in the Greek text is not so much "authority" as it is with "all impressiveness." One does not object to someone speaking the Word with all impressiveness or "with all command" ("authority," KJV, **Titus 2:15**), but this example does not uphold the ungodly doctrine that Christians are to give their minds and consciences

into the hands of certain individuals for their keeping. If one does adopt the word *authority*, one must be conscious that the "authority" had to do with the Word of God, not the individual exercising dominion over one's faith, which Paul refutes in his **second letter** to the **Corinthians** (**1:24**).

The following translation captures the essence of **Titus 2:15**: "You must be continually speaking these things, and continually encouraging and exposing with every requirement [*from God*]! You must never let anyone slight you!"[142] The Greek word is not εξξουσιψα exousia, but εςπιταγηψ epitagh. As one reflects upon the words of Jesus, one does not come away with the idea that certain individuals are given dictatorial powers in order to force them into compliance with their opinions about controversial issues that currently divide Christians. The prevailing interpretation that elders "rule over" God's people is totally unbiblical. Another Scripture that is frequently cited to uphold the doctrine of authoritarian leadership is **1 Timothy 5:17**. The following is a brief review of this Scripture in order to determine if this Scripture is translated according to the intent of the author.

1 TIMOTHY 5:17:

ELDERS THAT RULE (Προι;στημι Proisthmi) WELL

Hebrews 13:7, 17, and **24** are not the only Scriptures that are appealed to in order to uphold the doctrine that elders are to "rule" over God's people. Many sincere Christian leaders give credence to their demands of "rule" by citing **1 Timothy 5: 17**. Even though this passage, on the surface, appears to uphold the traditional view, nevertheless, one must again go back to the Greek text in order to set the record straight once more. The KJV reads: "Let the elders who rule (προεστω'τë proestwtes, "direct," "care for," or "having taken the lead"[143]) well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." This Greek word carries a number of nuances—depending on the context. This particular word carries various distinctions, for example, "to lead," "to manage," "to govern," "to give attention to," "to stand before," "to lead," "to care for," and "to engage in."[144]

One can easily see that one must be careful in seeking the exact nuance that the author intended to convey to his readers. Leaders often fail to do their homework before advancing a notion that is totally out of harmony with the Scriptures as a whole. Because of one's failure to grasp the import of the word as utilized by Paul, then this insufficiency has resulted or contributed to a monumental misunderstanding of leadership among God's people. To help each one to grasp the significance of this word, one's attention is called to the use of this word in the classical Greek usage, the Hellenistic biblical usage (LXX), and the Hellenistic biblical usage (New Testament). An analysis of the various usages in various contexts should set the tone for a more accurate interpretation of Paul's words to Timothy.

Classical Greek Usage—Προι;στημι Proisthmi

Προι;στημι proisthmi ("to stand before or over") is used of those who "stood before" an army in order to lead or of those who "stood over" the affairs of government. It is also employed in the sense of "support," "help," and "care" offered by those in prominent positions.[145] It appears that the KJV interpreted the Greek word in **1 Timothy 5:17** as someone who "stood over," rather than someone who took the lead out of concern for the souls under their oversight. Hopefully, this study of the various usages of this word will help one to formulate an interpretation that conforms to the Word of God.

Hellenistic Biblical Usage (LXX)—Προι;στημι Proisthmi

This verb (proisthmi) occurs eight times in the Septuagint (LXX). In the Complete Biblical Library, one reads the following comment: "In most cases it is used substantively (as a participle) to indicate the head of a house (**2 Samuel 13:17** [LXX, 2 Kings 13:17])."[146] The author of **2 Samuel** writes:

> He called his personal servant (προεστηκοψτα proesthkota[147]) and said, "Get this woman out of here and bolt the door after her" (**13:17**).

This word also reflects the meaning of "to stand before" in **Isaiah 43:24**:

> Neither hast thou purchased for me victims for silver, neither have I desired the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou didst stand before (προεψστῆ proesths, "to set before"[148]) me in thy sins, and in thine iniquities.[149]

In **1 Maccabees 5:19**, one also finds that the word is employed in the sense of one taking charge of the people in Jerusalem in order to defend the city against an impending assault.

> Unto whom he gave commandment, saying, Take ye the charge (προψστητε prosthte[150]) of this people, and see that ye make not war against the heathen until the time that we come again.[151]

Proverbs 26:17 also uses a form of proisthmi to designate a man who "tries to take charge" of other people's squabbles and thus interferes in something he knows nothing about. The Scripture reads:

> Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles (προεστωψ̈ proestws[152]) in a quarrel not his own.

Hellenistic Biblical Usage (New Testament)—Προι;στημι Proisthmi

Proisthmi appears eight times in the New Testament, all in Paul's writings. Half of this number is found in **1 Timothy**.

> He must manage (προι>σταψμενον proistamenon[153]) his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect (**1 Timothy 3:4**).

> (If anyone does not know how to manage (προστη'ναι prosthnai [154]) his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) [**1 Timothy 3:5**].

> A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage (προι>σταψμενοι proistamenoi[155]) his children and his household well (**1 Timothy 3:12**).

> The elders who direct the affairs (προεστω'τë proestwtes[156]) of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching (**1 Timothy 5:17**).

In the above passages from **First Timothy**, Paul utilizes proisthmi in setting forth the qualifications for bishop (εζλπιψσκοπον episkopon, "overseer") [**1 Timothy 3:4-5**], the deacons (διαψκονοι diakonoi) [**3:12**], and elders (πρεσβυψτερö presbuteros, "older men") [**5:17**]—all are required to manage ("rule" KJV) their households well. The emphasis is upon the quality of their leadership, not dictatorial rulership. It is noteworthy that the KJV translates "ruleth" (**3:4**), "to rule" (**3:5**), "ruling" (**3:12**), and "rule" (**5:17**) for the Greek word proisthmi, rather than "manage." Again, one witnesses, so it seems, the "cult of the bishops" in the translations of these passages. The import of these Scriptures is simply that the leader must respectfully lead or guide his family; otherwise, he is not fit to stand before God's house to care from them.

This particular Greek word simply means, "to stand before," "to lead," or "to care for." It appears that this word was shaded by the KJV translators to promote the "cult of the bishops," who were on the translating committee for King James, the head of the Church of England. The basic idea associated with this word is not "rule," but rather the concept of "to care for." As one investigates this word proisthmi, the question that confronts every interpreter is: Does "to care for" convey the intended meaning of Paul's use of this word to Timothy? Or does this word imply that one is to dominate, dictate, legislate, mandate, or exercise authority over the Christian community? Since this word conveys a variety of meanings, it is essential that the biblical exegete consider the context in order to try to arrive at a correct use of the terminology.

Just a casual glance at the context of **1 Timothy 3:4** reveals that Paul is speaking of one who cares for his household, or he is one who is concerned to lead his household in a way that leads to holiness. This verse

does not seem to speak of this individual ruling his household with an iron fist. The NIV translates this verse: "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect." Again, one discovers a similar use of the word in relation to deacons: "A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well" (**3:12**). In all of the above citations from Paul, one quickly observes that the idea behind the word pertains to one being an example to his family. The other four occurrences of this word appear in the following Scriptures (NIV):

> If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern (οΣ προι>σταψμενö Jo proistajmenos, "the one taking the lead"[157]) diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (**Romans 12:8**).
>
> Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you (προι>σταμεψνοϋ proistamenous, "taking the lead"[158]) in the Lord and who admonish you (**1 Thessalonians 5:12**).
>
> This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote (προι;στασθαι proistasqai, "to maintain"[159]) themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone (**Titus 3:8**).
>
> Our people must learn to devote (προι;στασθαι proistasqai, "to maintain"[160]) themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives (**Titus 3:14**).

The KJV translates proisthmi as "ruleth" (**Romans 12:8**), "over you" (**1 Thessalonians 5:12**), "to maintain" (**Titus 3:8**), and "to maintain" (**Titus 3:14**). The NRSV translates **Romans 12: 8** as follows: "the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness."[161] The following paraphrase of **Romans 12:8** is also to the point of the context: "If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously."[162] The Revised Standard Version is also on target when it translates: "He who gives aid, with zeal."[163] The NASB also captures the true intent of the word proisthmi in its rendering of **Romans 12:8**: "He who leads, with diligence."[164] Reicke seems to have shown conclusively that proisthmi in the New Testament conveys the concept of "to lead." He pungently captures the core meaning of this word:

> 3. The eight instances of proi>vsthmi in the NT contain only intransitive forms of the verb. They occur in the Pauline corpus and fall under the nuances a.-c. to which special attention has been directed above (→ 700, 22 ff.).

In most cases προι>ψστημι seems to have sense a. "to lead" (→ 700, 22 ff.) but the context shows in each case that one must also take into account sense b, "to care for" (→ 700, 29 ff.). This is explained by the fact that caring was the obligation of leading members of the infant Church. Thus Paul says in R. 12:8: οΣ μεταδιδοὺ· εςν αΣπλοψτητι, οΣ προι>σταψμενὸ εςν σπουδη§, οΣ εςλεω§ν εςν ιΣλαροψτητι. Here the second expression is plainly analogous to the other two, which both refer to works of love. The meaning, then, is somewhat as follows: "He who gives let him do so with simplicity, he who cares with zeal, he who does good with cheerfulness." Yet the whole passage is speaking of the gifts of grace imparted to different office-bearers, so that οιΣ προι>σταψμενοι are a special group separated by the Spirit for the primary task of caring for others (cf. αςντιληψ́ίεϊ, κυβερνηψσεϊ, 1 C. 12:28). The position is the same in 1 Th. 5:12: προι>σταψμενοι. According to the context the task of the προι>σταψμενοι is in large measure that of pastoral care, and the emphasis is not on their rank or authority but on their efforts for the eternal salvation of believers. How far there is already reference to specific offices in these passages from R. and 1 Th. is a matter of lively debate; the endowment with the Spirit presupposed in R. is no argument against this thesis, since Spirit and office are not antithetical in the NT, e.g., Mt. 7:29; Ac. 6:3. In 1 Tm. again, where the verb and especially the participle occurs repeatedly, the ideas of guiding and caring are both present. In this case the reference is quite definitely to official leaders in the churches. 1 Tm. 3:4 describes an acceptable bishop as a man who rules (προι>σταψμενον) his own house well and can keep his children under control. We then read: "If a man know not how to rule (προστη§ναι) his own house, how shall he take care of (εςπιμελὴψσεται) the church of God?" v. 5. Here, then, "to rule" is the same as "to take care of." Cf. also 5:8: "But if he provide not (προνοει`) for his own, and specially for those of his own house …" Then 1 Tm. 3:12 describes good deacons as those who care well (προι>σταψμενοι) for their own houses (families and servants). The author certainly has in view the authority of the head of the household (*patria potestas* → V, 949 ff., 961 ff., 1004 f.) but his attention is primarily directed, not to the exercise of power, but to the discretion and care to be shown therein. Finally, 1 Tm. 5:17 says that καλω§ προεστω§τὲ πρεσβυψτεροι (→ 666, 26 ff.) are worthy of double reward, especially those who labour in the word and teaching. The context shows that the reference is not merely to elders who rule well but especially to those who exercise a sincere cure of souls. The second half of the verse makes their diligence in pastoral care the criterion. This is not to deny that here, too, the proi>stavmenoi have a special dignity and play a leading role as elders. In all these instances, however, the verb has in the NT the primary senses of both "to lead" and "to care for," and this agrees with the distinctive nature of office in the NT, since according to Lk. 22:26 the one who is chief (οΣ

ηΣγουψμενö) is to be as he who serves.[165]

From the above citation, his specific comments on the import of this particular word in its relationship to leaders is significant: "According to the context the task of the προι>σταψμενοι is in large measure that of pastoral care, and the emphasis is not on their rank or authority but on their efforts for the eternal salvation of believers." The "leading ones" are those who have a sincere, genuine, true, trustworthy interest in seeking to "serve" God's people. They want to lead, conduct, direct, and govern Christians in their daily walk with the Lord. In short, spiritual leaders want to "care for" God's saints, not rule God's saints. The thought behind the comments of Paul is that leaders are to exercise sincere care for the souls of God's people. Again, it goes almost without saying, whenever one seeks to interpret a word, one must seek its meaning within the context. The thought is that "leading ones" are "to protect," "to represent," "to care for," "to help," and "to further one's spiritual walk."

CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the various words upon which many sincere Christians have wrenched out of context in order to give credibility to the current traditions within the Churches of Christ that certain men have dominion over one's faith. As a result of this misapplication and twisting of Scripture, divisions have proliferated when thinking Christians refused to allow certain men to exercise authority over their own minds. One has observed, in this essay, that Christians do not object to obedience demanded by religious leaders concerning instructions about holy living. What Christians do object to is: individuals assuming to "lord it over" or to "exercise authority over" God's heritage.

All Christians are to respond positively to the leadership of godly men concerning holiness. Yes, in this area every Christian is to submit. Men who are appointed or assume the role of leadership must be men who are "full of faith." Christians want to imitate this kind of life style. This is the reason that the author of Hebrews writes: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (**Hebrews 13:7**). This essay is written in order to help leaders become the kind of individuals that the Holy Spirit desires in order that men and women might model their lives after men filled with the Holy Spirit. Even though Paul could say, "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm" (**2 Corinthians 1:24**), yet, he could also say,

> Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— [33] even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. [1] Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ (**1 Corinthians 10:32-33**).

There is nothing wrong with the English word *obey* if this word is

understood correctly within its context. The problem many Christians have with the traditional interpretation is that the word *obey* is employed by many leaders in the same sense that children must obey their parents. This mentality can lead to a David Koresh' cult or a Jim Jones' cult in which the members of the fellowship surrender total obedience to the leader. This essay has sought to examine all of the words frequently cited by many well meaning Christians that appear on the surface to give validity to the demands of some spiritual leaders. As one reflects upon any Greek word, one must always remember that words frequently carry several nuances; thus, one must always consult the context in order to try to arrive at a definition that is harmony with the Word of God.

One cannot deny that the Christian community needs leadership. God gave gifted men and women to the early church in order to bring the church to maturity in their faith and their faithfulness (see **Ephesians 4:11-13**). The Christian church still needs men and women who have dedicated their lives to the study and ministry of God's Word. Hopefully, this essay will assists leaders in their endeavors to lead God's people in a way that is in keeping of Holy Scripture—not as rulers, but as examples of Christian living.[166]

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

[2] See Mary Alice Chrnalogar, Twisted Scriptures: Breaking Free from Churches That Abuse (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, revised edition 2000), 189-200, for an excellent analysis of mind control practiced by many

leaders within the Christian church. See also Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches That Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) and *Recovering from Churches That Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

[3] One does not deny that leaders can take action against other individuals if they live a profligate life or deny the deity of Jesus. All Christians must take a stand upon these issues. The problem comes when elders decide a particular interpretation of a Scripture that does not deal with one of the above issues—immorality and denial that Jesus has come in the flesh.

[4] For a detailed analysis of Romans 14:1—15:7 and 1 Corinthians 8, see Dallas Burdette, "Watch Out for Those Who Cause Division," (ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist (accessed 3 January 2002), located under the caption MISAPPLIED/TWISTED SCRIPTURES.

[5] Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1982), 265.

[6] Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 58.

[7] See Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 29-68, in which they discuss the "difficulties in hearing the text" and "the forgotten interpreters." I am indebted to these two individuals for their insightful analysis on the problems that hinder correct interpretation.

[8] *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

[9] Semantical studies pertain to words and their contextual meanings or dimensions within the biblical text.

[10] Owen L. Crouch, *God Has Spoken: Expository Preaching and Teaching, Hebrews* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1990), 446.

[11] Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 586.

[12] Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, in Frank Gaebelein, Gen. Ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol., 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 152.

[13] E. Schuyler English, *Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (South Carolina: Southern Bible House, 1955), 501.

[14] See Dallas Burdette, "Divorce Sayings in the Synoptics and Paul," [ON-LINE]. Available from http:/www.freedominchrist.net (accessed

3 January 2002], located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under caption DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE.

[15] For an example of what this kind of mind control can lead to, see Dallas Burdette, "David Koresh: An American Messiah?" [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 12-7-2001], located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under the caption WORLD RELIGIONS AND CULTS.

[16] For my analysis of Ephesians 5:19 and instrumental music, see Dallas Burdette, "God Is A Lover of Music: Psalm 150" [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 12-07-2001], located under BIBLICAL STUDIES and then under the caption OLD TESTAMENT and then under the caption PSALMS.

[17] Private email to Dallas Burdette from William H. (Bill) Smith Jr., dated Tuesday, December 25, 2001, 9:42am. This citation is quoted with the permission of Bill Smith.

[18] Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, 264.

[19] Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group) 1997.

[20] This mind-set resulted in the countless loss of life. Hundreds were tortured and put to death because they thought for themselves. For an overview of the consequences of this type philosophy, see Dallas Burdette, "We Speak Where the Bible Speaks" [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 9 January 2002], located under the caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under the caption HERMENEUTICS.

[21] Gustavus S. Paine, *The Men behind the King James Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 95-96.

[22] Neal Windham, *New Testament Greek: For Preachers and Teachers* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 63. I am deeply indebted to Windham for his chapter on morphemes (pp. 63-90) for this study on "Obey Them That Have the Rule Over You."

[23] Ibid.

[24] David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 55.

[25] Ibid., 54-55.

[26] F. B. Huey, Jr. & Bruce Corley, *A Student's Dictionary for*

Biblical & Theological Studies (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 150.

[27] Again, I am indebted to David Allen Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 54.

[28] Ibid.

[29] For a detailed study of phonemes, see Windham, *New Testament Greek for Preachers and Teachers*, 63-145.

[30] For a detailed study of λυψω (luw), see Ray Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), 11-14.

[31] The first syllable ηΣ is pronounced "hay." The rough breathing Σ over the long "e" (η) is transliterated as an "h" in English. The last syllable μαι is pronounced "my." Thus, the complete word is pronounced as hay gay o my.

[32] See Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* (New Jersey: Theological Book Agency, 1969), 49.

[33] Harold Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), viii.

[34] Metzger, *A Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, 49.

[35] See Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 72. Also see Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon*, 149-150. These two works provide an extensive collection of root words.

[36] See Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, 66. See also Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon*, 104.

[37] Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 73-75.

[38] Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, 51. See also Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon*, 161 for a detailed lists of word formations that contain the Greek root αςρχ.

[39] See Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek—English New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1969).

[40] For an analysis of Galatians 1:6-9, see Dallas Burdette, "The Heart of the Gospel" [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 3 January 2002], located under MISAPPLIED/TWISTED SCRIPTURES.

[41] First Person, plural, present, active, indicative, from κυριευψω kurieuw.

[42] Third person, plural, present, active, indicative, from κατακυριευψω katakurieuw.

[43] Third person, plural, present, active, indicative, from κατεξουσιαψζω katexousiazw.

[44] See William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 307.

[45] First person, singular, present, middle, indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[46] Second person, singular, present, active, indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[47] *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

[48] *The Contemporary English [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995 by the American Bible Society.

[49] I know of one brother who became so dogmatic about his interpretation of Scriptures that he eventually had to disfellowship even his wife since she did not agree with him concerning many of his odd interpretations.

[50] When the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, he is speaking with the full authority of the pope; in other words, he is one who is sitting on the seat of authority. Many religious leaders today assume that they too speak with full authority since they are sitting in the seat of authority. This philosophy is totally against the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.

[51] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 438.

[52] Third person, plural, aorist, active, indicative—from πειψθω (peiqw).

[53] Third person, plural, imperfect, middle, indicative—from πειψθω (peiqw).

[54] Present active, participle, masculine, singular, nominative—

from πειψθω (peiqw).

[55] Second person, singular, present, acitive, indicative—from πειψθω (peiqw).

[56] Present, active, participle, masculine, singular, nominative—from πειψθω (peiqw).

[57] Present, passive, infinitive—from πειψθω (peiqw).

[58] Rudolf Bultmann, "Πειψθω" in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and trans. By Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:4.

[59] Verb: second person, plural, present, active, and imperative—from υΣπακουψω (&upakouw, "obey")

[60] See William Hersey Davis, *Beginner's Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1923), 166-170 for an excellent treatment of the imperative mood. Also see William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 302-310.

[61] Second person, singular, first aorist, imperative, from τηρεψω threw.

[62] Verb: second person, singular, aorist, active, imperative—from διψδωμι (didwmi).

[63] The Classical Greek period embraces the centuries from Homer (c 900 BCE) to the Alexandrian conquests (c 300 BCE). In this stage the Attic dialect secured dominance. The Greek literature that has come down to this century is predominantly Attic. Attic was the molding force in all the subsequent developments of the Greek language. It constituted the chief basis of New Testament Greek.

[64] See Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., The Complete Biblical Library Series, *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary* (Springfield, Missouri: World Library Press), s.v. "3844, πειψθω (peiqw), verb," 15:124.

[65] Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek—English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 1353-1354.

[66] See Gilbrant, *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary*, 15:124.

[67] Perfect passive participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from πειθω, peiqw.

[68] First person plural, perfect passive indicative, from πειθω, peiqw.

[69] Third person plural, first aorist, passive, indicative, from πειθω, peiqw.

[70] First aorist, active, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from πειθω, peiqw.

[71] Present, active, participle, nominative, singular, singular, from πειθω, peiqw.

[72] Third person, singular, imperfect, active, indicative, from πειθω, peiqw.

[73] Verb: present, active, participle, masculine, singular, nominative.

[74] Second person, singular, present, active, indicative—"to persuade, to have confidence," from πειθω, peiqw.

[75] Present, active, participle, masculine, plural, dative, from αςπειθεψω apeiqew.

[76] Present, middle, participle, dative, plural, masculine, from πειψθω peiqw.

[77] Second perfect, active, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from πειψθω peiqw.

[78] Second perfect active infinitive, from πειψθω peiqw.

[79] Present, middle, infinitive, from πειψθω peiqw.

[80] First person plural, present active indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[81] First person singular, perfect passive indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[82] By Rudolph Bultmann, "πειψθω" peiqw," in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:1.

[83] Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible words* (Grand Rapids: Regency/Zondervan, 1985, 461-62.

[84] W. E. Vine, "Governor," *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 276-78.

[85] For an excellent discussion of these ages, see David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 143-169; Dana and Mantey, *A Manuel Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927, reprint 1964), 5-15.

[86] See Thoralf Gilbrant, International Editor, "2215. ηΣγεμωψν Jhgemwn," in *The Complete Biblical Library: Greek-English Dictionary, Zeta-Kappa 2176-2947,* (Springfield, Missouri: The Complete Biblical Library, 1990), 41.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., 43

[90] Ibid.

[91] Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, new edition, revised and augmented by Sir Henry Stuart Jones (Great Britain: Clarendon Press, 1973), 763.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 344.

[94] *The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

[95] *The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

[96] Darrell L. Bock, "New Testament Word Analysis," in Scot McKnight, ed., *Introducing New Testament Interpretation: Guide to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 103.

[97] David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 122-123. His chapter on "Semantics: Determining Meaning" is one of the best treatments that I have read, see pages 120-142.

[98] Present, middle, participle, accusative, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[99] Present, middle, participle, genitive, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[100] Present, middle, participle, dative, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[101] Present, middle, participle, accusative, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[102] Present, middle, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[103] Present, middle, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai. The NIV translates the participle as "the one who rules," but this could also be translated as "the one who leads." See Clean L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zonervan,1998), 166, write: "ηΣγουψμενö pres. mid, (dep.) part. HΣγεψομαι (# 2451) to lead, to be the leader. Part. As subst."

[104] First person, singular, perfect, passive, indicative, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[105] Third person, singular, first aorist, middle, indicative, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[106] F. Buschsel, "ΣηΣγεψομαι," in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols.., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 2:907.

[107] Ray Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1992), 156-157.

[108] See Gustavus S. Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977) for an excellent treatment of the philosophy and power of bishops behind the King James Version.

[109] See F. B. Huey, Jr. and Bruce Corley, "Dynamic Equivalence," *A Student's Dictionary for Biblical & Theological Studies: A Handbook of Special and Technical Terms* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1983), 67, where they write:

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE. A type of translation in which the message of the biblical text is conveyed to the reader with effect equivalent to that for the original reader; closer to a paraphrase and contrasted with formal equivalence.

[110] Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 163.

[111] Collocation has to do with placing words together in a proper order—arrange. In other words, collocate means to place side by side. For a thorough analysis of collocation, see John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 160-174.

[112] Ibid., 163.

[113] W. E. Vine, "Obedience, Obedient, Obey," *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 438.

[114] Ibid., 97.

[115] See Rudolph Bultmann, "Πειψθω" in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., trans. By Geoffrey Bromiley, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.s, 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 6:4.

[116] Second person, plural, present, middle, imperative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[117] See Millard J. Erickson, "Diachronic semantics," *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 43, where he defines diachronic semantics: "**Diachronic semantics**. Semantical or linguistic study which emphasizes development through periods of time."

[118] One may think this an insignificant point, but in the early 1990s, a first cousin of mine, related to me a strange custom among some one-cup and non-Sunday school churches in which the congregation insisted upon a chair next to the communion table. This odd fellowship was referred to as "the sitting down Church of Christ." Since the KJV translated the Greek word for "recline" as "sat down," this group wanted to follow the so-called "pattern theology" of prescribed rituals for a worship service. In other words, according to many believers, God ordained a blue-print for every act performed on Sunday morning.

, passive, infinitive, from πειψθω peiqw.

[120] Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of Holy Scripture* (Edinburgh 1839; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 404 (page reference is to reprint edition).

[121] L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand

Rapids: Baker, 1982), 80.

[122] Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), XIII.

[123] David Allen Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 133.

[124] Ibid., 132.

[125] A synonym is a word having a meaning that is the same or nearly the same as that of another word in the same language. But no two words are identical or even so nearly identical that we could lose either without loss to the language. Every word can do something that no other word can do. For instance, synonyms for "persuasion" are: inducing, suasion, influencing, enticing, enticement, exhorting, exhortation, seducing, seduction, inveighing, inveiglement, alluring, wheeling, cajoling, cajolery, winning over, talking over or around; synonyms for "obey" are: submit, answer (to), respond, act (upon or on), bow to surrender, yield , perform, do, carry out, attend to orders, do what one is told, accept, accord, consent, do what is expected of one, do one's duty, redeem one's pledge, do as one says, come at call, serve, concur, accede, assent, conform, acquiesce, mind, take order, do the will of, do one's bidding, comply, fulfill, play second fiddle, and so on.

[126] Third person, plural, present, active, indicative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[127] Present, active, infinitive, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[128] Second person plural, present, act. Indicative, or imperative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[129] Second person plural, present, act. Indicative, or imperative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[130] Present, active, participle, dative, plural, masculine, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[131] Third person, singular, first aorist, active, indicative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[132] Second person, plural, active, imperative, from υΣπειψκω Jupeikw.

[133] W. E. Vines, "OBEDIENCE, OBEDIENT, OBEY," in the *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*,

(Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 438.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ray Stedman, *Hebrews* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity, 1992), 156-157.,

[136] Jimmy Allen, *Re-Baptism? What One Must Know To Be Born Again* (Louisiana: Howard Publishing, 1991), 236.

[137] See Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 84, where they write:

> Ignoring the full historical and literary contexts, and often the individual narrative, people concentrate on small units only and thus miss interpretational clues. If you contextualize enough, you can make almost any part of Scripture say anything you want it to say.

[138] See the following books that issue cautions in this particular field of study: George J. Zemek, "Grammatical Analysis and Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of biblical Exposition,* ed., John MacArthur, Jr. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 154-176; Moises Silva, *Biblical Words & Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984); David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); Darrell L. Bock, "New Testament Word Analysis," in *Introducing New Testament Introduction*, ed., Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 97-113.

[139] Rudolph Bultmann, "πειψθω," in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vols., 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:1.

[140] Ibid., 3.

[141] Ibid., 4.

[142] *The Christian Bible: Its New Contract Writings Portion* (Mammoth Spring, AR: Christian Bible Society, 1991).

[143] Perfect, active, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from προι;στνμι proisthmi.

[144] See Strong, #4291; Bauer, 713; Moulton-Milligan, 541; Kittel, 6:700-703; and Liddell-Scott, 1482-1483.

[145] See Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The Complete Biblical Library: The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary*, Pi-Rho, Word Numbers 3665-4374, # 4150 (The Complete Biblical Library: Springfield, Missouri, 1991), 303.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Perfect, active, participle, accusative, singular, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[148] First person, aorist, active, singular, indicative, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[149] Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990, 879 (page reference is to the reprint edition).

[150] Second person, aorist, active, plural, indicative, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[151] Ibid., "The Apocrypha," 151.

[152] Perfect, active, participle, nominative, singular, masculine,, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[153] Present, middle, participle, accusative, singular, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[154] Second aorist, active, infinitive, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[155] Present, middle, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[156] Perfect, active, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[157] Present, middle, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi. See Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek – English New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1969), where he translates: "the one taking the lead in diligence."

[158] Present, middle, participle, accusative, plural, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi. Ibid., where he translates: "taking the lead."

[159] Present, middle, infinitive, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[160] Present, middle, infinitive, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[161] *The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

[162] *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

[163] *The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

[164] *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

[165] Reicke, "προι;στημι," in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and trans. By Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vols. 10, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 6:701-702

[166] See Givens Blakley, "Studies Especially for Elders," [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.wotruth.com/elders.htm. This series set forth the "the real role of elders and how it fits into Divine objectives," writes Givens Blakley. Also see the following essays dealing with leadership by Dallas Burdette, "Political Power of the Pharisees and Their Oral Tradition," "Biographical Material on the Life of R. L. Kilpatrick," and "Kilpatrick's Concept of Leadership" [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 3 January 2002), located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under caption ELDERS. See also the following essays by Norman Parks: (1) "Jesus Versus the Eldership," (2) "It Shall Not Be So Among You," and (3) "Restoration & Models of the Church [On-line]. Access through Dallas Burdette's ONLINE RESOURCES. Go to http:/www.freedominchrist.net and then to ONLINE RESOURCES and then to ELDERS (Accessed 9 January 2002). Also see Carl Ketcherside, "That All May Be One" (written 1957) [ON LINE]. Available from http:www.unity-in-diversity.org (accessed 9 January 2002). Also see Carl Ketcherside, "The Legal Tangle" (written 1975, vol., 37) [ONLINE]. Available from Ibid. See also Leroy Garrett, "Pell-mell in Little Rock" (Restoration Review, Vol., 29, No. 4, April 1987) [ONLINE]. Available from http:/www.restorationreview.org (accessed 9 January 2002).

The Political Power of the Pharisees and Their Oral Traditions

Thrust statement: Jesus warns His disciples against false prophets.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5—7; Matthew 23—25.

> Orthodox Judaism is not simply "Old Testament theology without Jesus." It is the religion of "You have heard it said." This was Jesus' repeated response to the erroneous oral teachings of the Pharisees. We can use the same technique today as we examine the Talmud.[1]

The entire gospel of Matthew is a book about conflict. This conflict centers on the religious leaders. John begins his ministry with conflict with the religious leaders; Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee with His Sermon on the Mount, which is an analysis of the religious leaders' teachings versus God's teachings. Jesus warns His disciples about "false prophets" in His Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 7:15**) and in His final discourse to His disciples about the religious leaders (**Matthew 24:11, 24**). These three Scriptures are cited very loosely against believers today who do not always concur with other believers over a so-called pattern for a public worship service. Hopefully, this analysis of the Pharisees and their Oral Traditions will assist Christians in correctly handling these Scriptures about "false prophets." The objective of this essay is to illustrate that the teachers that Jesus warned against were men who were rotten to the core.

When Jesus appeared on the scene, He confronted over one hundred and fifty years of traditions from the Pharisees. Blomberg says, "According to Josephus, the Pharisees emerged at least as early as the reign of John Hyrcanus, opposing the combination of kingly and priestly power in the Hasmonean rulers."[2] Elwell and Yarbrough point out that the name "'Pharisee' probably derives from an Aramaic word meaning 'separate'; hence, the Pharisees were 'the separate ones.'"[3] Since the synagogues were under their control and leadership, Blair calls attention to the strong influence that the Pharisees had among the

Israelites.[4] It is this control that John the Baptist and Jesus encountered in the beginning of their ministries. There are three basic sources that individuals rely upon for their information concerning the Pharisees: (1) Josephus, (2) the New Testament, and (3) rabbinic documents.

JOSEPHUS

The writings of Josephus help to shed light on Jesus' encounter with the religious leaders with their oral traditions.[5] These oral traditions were later codified about 200 C.E. The Pharisees built up a body of tradition that was as binding as the written Torah. Josephus in his Antiquities of the Jews, written ca. 94 CE, wrote of the traditions of the Pharisees:

> What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers.[6]

The oral law was for the Pharisee equal to the written law. As Murphy has written, "The Pharisees built up a substantial body of tradition that was as binding for them as written Torah. This tradition probably corresponds to the later rabbinic idea of oral Torah. For the rabbis oral Torah was an integral part of the Torah given to Moses on Sinai, but it was passed on orally through the generations."[7] The stress upon the Oral Torah by the Pharisees is what caused the Pharisees to confront Jesus about His disciples breaking the "tradition of the elders." Matthew preserves this encounter:

> Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: '"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'" (**Matthew 15:1-9**).

In the time of Christ, the Pharisees numbered about six thousand.[8] Josephus wrote about an incidence that occurred during the time of Herod the Great (37 BCE to 4 CE), which states the approximate number of Pharisees during this time:

> (41) For there was a certain sect of men that were Jews, who valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the law of their fathers,

> and made men believe they were highly favored by God, by whom this set of women were inveigled. These are those that are called the sect of the Pharisees, who were in a capacity of greatly opposing kings. A cunning sect they were, and soon elevated to a pitch of open fighting and doing mischief. (42) Accordingly, when all the people of the Jews gave assurance of their good will to Caesar, and to the king's government, these very men did not swear, being above six thousand; and when the king imposed a fine upon them, Pheroras's wife paid their fine for them.[9]

Before approaching the second source (New Testament) of our knowledge about the Pharisees, a comment by Scheindlin graphically captures the role that the Pharisees played during the reigns of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE), Atistobulus I (104-103 BCE), Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE), and Salome Alexandra (76-67 BCE).

Another group that was sometimes in opposition to the Hasmoneans was the Pharisees. They seem originally to have been non-priests who were eager to observe a strict rule of ritual purity and religious probity, and who therefore sometimes came into conflict with the authorities. Their leadership did not claim a cultic function, like the priests, but rather expertise in religious law and lore based on a body of religious traditions supplementary to the Torah, which they called 'the oral Torah." They laid stress on the obligation of each individual to observe religious practices of ever-increasing complexity and detail, rather than simply relying on the priesthood to accomplish the nation's religious duties vicariously by offering sacrifices on their behalf. By the first century C.E., their number included some priests and aristocrats as well.[10]

NEW TESTAMENT

This background of the Pharisees from Josephus sets the stage for a proper understanding of the role that the Pharisees played in their plot to ultimately destroy Jesus who posed a threat to their authority. To grasp Pharisaic history, one must not study Phariseeism in isolation from its historical roots and the strong political power this group yielded during the time of John Hyrcanus, the ministry of Jesus, and the academy established in Jamnia following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Jesus questioned their authority and this act got Him into trouble with the religious leaders.

As stated above the religion of the Pharisees is the religion of "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago" (**Matthew 5:21**). Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, dealt with the oral Torah of the Pharisees. This now-famous Sermon set the stage for the controversies that followed Jesus throughout His ministry. Davies aptly stresses the meaning of "You have heard" in his analysis of three passages in **Matthew** (**12:1-14; 15:1-20; 19:1-19**).[11] In the first citation (**12:1-14**), Jesus discusses the Pharisees' oral traditions about the Sabbath; in the second reference (**15:1-20**), Jesus again addresses the oral Torah of the Pharisees concerning the laws of purity; and in the third quotation (**19:1-19**), He addresses their traditions concerning divorce.

Jesus, in the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, warned His disciples about false prophets (**7:15**). Prior to this admonition, Jesus went right to the heart of oral

traditions. This analysis and condemnation of the oral Torah of the Pharisees by Jesus is conceded by many modern day scholars. Davies, one such scholar, assesses the true intent of the Sermon on the Mount when he writes, "the SM itself is not set forth as a 'new', revolutionary Law, in sharp antithesis to that given on Sinai."[12] Again, Davies points out, with justice, that the "You have heard" but "I tell you" is Jesus' ethical demands set over against those of Judaism.[13] North also states the matter firmly: "The approach I have chosen here is to adopt Jesus' use of the technique, 'You have heard it said.' What He was attacking in each case was either a false tradition of the Pharisees or a false interpretation they imposed on an Old Testament text."[14]

Glasscock does not overstate the case when he says, "Jesus was about to attack the oral interpretation of the law, which most Jews of the time had been conditioned to accept as the Law itself. Six times in the next few verses he will challenge their oral traditions."[15] Hagner also notes that "By means of six bold antitheses representing the teaching of Jesus, Matthew now contrasts Jesus' exposition of the true and ultimate meaning of the Torah with the more common, rabbinic understandings of the commandments."[16]

The oral Torah was not codified until ca. 200 CE.[17] North illustrates through citations from the Mishnah and the Gemarah,[18] which is the codification of the oral Torah,[19] that there are contradictions between the written Torah and the oral Torah. Pilkington comments on the origin of the oral Torah: "The collection we now have in the Mishnah was edited by Rabbi Judah the Prince (*Ha-Nasi*), who lived from 135 to 217 CE. . . . 'Oral' is indeed an apt description of the Torah which followed the written Torah because it was essentially a record of oral discussion in courtrooms and academies."[20]

The Pharisees were in revolt against God's written law; that is, the oral law was on par with the written law. The Jewish leaders carried out this rebellion in the name of God's law. This melting together of the two laws caused Jesus to issue a scathing rebuke against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Matthew succinctly captures one such confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees:

> Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who

> swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean (**Matthew 23:15-27**).

Jesus not only concludes His ministry with a scathing rebuke of the religious leaders, but He also began His ministry with a brief analysis of their rejection of the written Torah for their oral Torah. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus discusses the "You have heard" (oral Torah) with "but I say unto you" (written Torah). For an extra Biblical source (oral) of this kind of unbiblical reasoning can be found among Israel's religious leaders. For instance, Rabbi Eleazar issued a statement—following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE—upon the meaning of "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." His commentary is a classic example of "You have heard." The Babylonian Talmud gives the following comment about Eleazar's commentary: "R. Eleazar further stated: What is meant by the Scriptural text, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh? This teaches that Adam had intercourse with every beast and animal but found no satisfaction until he cohabited with Eve."[21] If Matthew had recorded this saying, one could also find Jesus' "but I say unto you": "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death" (**Exodus 22:19**).

The Pharisees with their oral Torah exercised tremendous political power before, during, and after the ministry of Christ. It is in this regard to political power that Rosenberg draws attention to the domination that the Pharisees had even over the Sadducees:

> Since the Sadducees were for the most part Temple priests and wealthy aristocrats, their influence over the people as a whole was rather limited, and during much of their existence they had to abide by the rulings and interpretations of the Pharisees (This extended even to the procedures of the Temple sacrifices, although the chief priests were themselves Sadducees.) With the destruction of the Temple the Sadducees ceased to exist as a sect. [22]

Their power extended even to the control of the synagogues. This control also existed even in the time of Jesus. Even when many of the leaders of Israel believed on Jesus, still they would not confess Him for fear of being thrown out of the synagogues by the Pharisees. John, an apostle of Jesus, writes about the tremendous influence exercised by the Pharisees: "Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of

the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God (**12:42-43**).[23]

Paul, a Pharisee, sets an example of the hatred of the Pharisees against Christians. In the Philippian letter, he describes his ancestry and earlier behavior toward the church: "If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless" (**Philippians 3:4-6**).[24] Luke calls attention, in his book to Theophilus, to the hatred exercised by some Pharisees against the followers of Jesus. One such person that Luke names is Paul; Luke lets his readers know that prior to Paul's conversion that he gave his approval to the stoning of Stephen (**Acts 8:1**). Opposition to Stephen arose as a result of members from the "Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia" (6:9).

After the conversion of Paul, he, too, had to warn against the circumcision group (**Titus 1:11**). Paul tells Titus that

> They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good (**1:11-16**).

The Pharisees were a part of this circumcision group. When some men from Judea went to Antioch, they created problems by insisting that unless one was circumcised according to the Law of Moses, then one could not be saved (**Acts 15:1**). As a result of this controversy, a council met at Jerusalem (**15:4**). During the meeting of the church, which included the apostles and elders, Luke reports: "some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, 'The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses'" (**15:5**). The influence of the Pharisees remained a viable force throughout the ministry of Paul. The Pharisees were so strong that they managed to survive the destruction of Jerusalem and establish a school in Jamnia (in Galilee).

POST-70 CE AND THE PHARISEES

Following the Jewish War, the center of Jewish life moved to Jabneh (in Greek, Jamnia) under the leadership of Johanan ben Zakkai. The priesthood, the sacrifices, and the temple worship ceased as a result of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.[25] After 70 CE, the terms "Pharisee" and "scribe" drop out of common usage and is replaced with "rabbi." The Jewish leaders who survived the fall of Jerusalem gathered at Jamnia, in western Judea,

and began studying the Torah.[26]

Johanan ben Zakkai, who opposed the war, managed to escape the city by letting it be understood that he was dead. The Romans allowed those in the city to carry out their dead in coffins and bury them outside the city. Once he was on the outside, he went to Vespasian who granted him the right to establish a school in Jamnia.[27] The religious leadership passed from the priesthood to the rabbis. Scheindlin calls attention to the important roll that Johanan ben Zakkai played in establishing rabbinic Judaism following the destruction of Jerusalem. He writes,

> What had to be guaranteed was the religious tradition embodied in the Torah and in the ever-proliferating body of religious laws. Johanan ben Zakkai and his colleagues thus took an important step in reorganizing Judaism into rabbinic Judaism, the form of the religion most widespread until the present. Rabbinic Judaism centers on the constant study of the torah and the oral traditions associated with it and involves the meticulous observance of religious regulations, which are understood as constituting a legal system. By placing the study of the Torah at the center of Jewish religious life, the rabbis incidentally laid the foundation for the preoccupation of later Jewish culture with intellectual activities of all kinds.[28]

Thus concludes Lavinia and Cohn-Sherbok that "It was the pharisaic interpretation of the law that survived and was continued in the work of the rabbis."[29] The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE did not destroy the political clout of the Pharisees. Even before the destruction of the temple, the interpretive tradition was well developed. Rabbi Rosenberg says,

> Because this interpretive tradition was well developed by the time of the Temple's destruction in the great revolt, Judaism was able to survive. Since the largest portion of the people looked to the Pharisaic sages for guidance, the end of the sacrificial system in the Jerusalem temple could be accepted, for the Pharisees mandated other forms of religious expression that could take its place.[30]

Sanders' writings also collaborate the findings of Rosenberg: "The Hasidim (at the time of the Hasmonean revolt) were Pharisees, and the post-70 rabbis were Pharisees; throughout the whole period 175 BCE to 135 CE the populace basically followed the Pharisees."[31] This history of the Pharisees before and after the destruction of Jerusalem helps one to understand more clearly the ones to whom the term "false prophets" refer in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7) in His castigation of the religious leaders in Israel (**Matthew 23**) and in His Eschatological Discourse (**Matthew 24**).

JAMNIA

Some scholars espouse a date of 85—100 CE for the writing of the Gospel of

Matthew.[32] This date is given in conjunction with the events that transpired in Jamnia ca. 90 CE. This notion of a late date is advanced in order to maintain that Matthew's purpose in writing was to combat rabbinic Judaism in Jamnia. But Carson approaches the purpose and early date with caution: "It is unwise to specify too precise an occasion and purpose, because the possibility of error and distortion increases as one leaves hard evidence behind for supposition."[33] It appears, so it seems to me, that Matthew's Gospel is dealing with the establishment of the identity of Jesus. But in this identity, Matthew records many of the encounters between Jesus and the religious leaders. Matthew's Gospel sets forth the uneasy feelings between Jesus and the religious leaders. The Gospel is not so much anti-Jewish as it is anti-Jewish leaders in their conflict with Jesus the Messiah.[34]

Murphy asserts that Matthew rewrote the traditions to make the Pharisees look worse.[35] One cannot but be respectful to the suggestion, but difficulties remain with his presuppositions. He correctly assesses the events that surrounded Jamnia when he writes about the Pharisees and Jamnia, but when he asserts that this Gospel was written to combat rabbinic Judaism in Jamnia, he cites no concrete evidence to substantiate his allegations:

> After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, a group of Pharisees, scribes, and others gathered at Jamnia to restructure Jewish society in the absence of the Temple and its establishment. They confirmed the Torah as the center of the life of the Jewish people, and made Pharisaic interpretation normative for all. Torah teachers were now called rabbis. The budding Christian movement now faced not a multiplicity of groups, but a rabbinic Judaism that claimed that it alone was normative. This caused the Christians to define themselves over against rabbinic Judaism. Many have seen the activity at Jamnia as the background against which to read the Gospel of Matthew.[36]

As noted above from the writings of Josephus and the New Testament, it goes almost without saying that Phariseeism dominated pre-70 Judaism as well as post-70 rabbinic Judaism. There are substantial continuities between them concerning an emphasis on non-biblical or oral traditions.[37] The Gospel of Matthew is a book of conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders during His ministry. Jamnia does confirm the entrenchment that the Pharisees had during Jesus' ministry; they never lost their zeal for the traditions of the elders—before and after the destruction of Jerusalem. Sanders also calls attention to the name change of the Pharisees following the destruction of the Jerusalem: "After the destruction of Jerusalem, they led the reconstruction of Judaism, giving up their party name, becoming more catholic, and taking the title 'rabbis', 'teachers'."[38]

CONCLUSION

This essay has only skimmed the surface in the area for a proper identification of the false prophets in **Matthew 7:15**; **24:11, 24**. As stated earlier, the objective of this essay is to help Christians to continue to correctly handle the Word of truth (**2. Timothy 2:15**). The

religious leaders in Jesus' day, especially the Pharisees, were so politically strong that even with the destruction of Jerusalem, they were able to regroup in Jamnia and solidify their oral traditions in written form—the Babylonian Talmud. These were the traditions that Jesus addressed in His Sermon on the Mount. These were the traditions that Jesus had to confront over and over in His ministry to the nation of Israel. Is it any wonder that He cautioned His disciples about the "leaven of the Pharisees"?

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[1] Gary North, *The Judeo-Christian Tradition: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), 73.

[2] Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 47. For an excellent overview of this time period, see Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 25-49.

[3] Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 56. Elwell and Yarbrough add some additional information to the history of the Pharisees: "They came into being sometime before the New Testament era. According to Josephus they gained prominence during the reigns of John Hyrcanus I (135/4—104 B.C.) and Alexandra (76-67 B.C.), Ibid. The date of the Pharisees predates even the reign of Hyrcanus. Josephus mentions the Pharisees' activities during the time of Jonathan (B. C. 161-143; *Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 13, Ch. 5, Sect. 7, Par. 161 and Sect. 9, Par. 171, in Whiston, 345, 346. For an excellent history of the Pharisees, see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief, 66 BCE—66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 380-451.

[4] Joe Blair, *Introducing the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 42.

[5] See Rabbi Roy A. Rosenberg, *The Concise Guide to Judaism: History, Practice, Faith* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 67, where he says,

> The early tradition of the Pharisees had held that, while the written Torah was meant to be transmitted in written form, the oral Torah was not to be put in writing. The teachings of the sages were to be memorized, rather, and transmitted by word of mouth from scholar to scholar. It did not take long, of course, for the number of interpretations and decisions that constituted the oral Torah to become so vast that even the most brilliant scholars would have trouble recalling all of them (they also had to remember the names of the various sages who had originated or transmitted a decision). For this reason the head of the academy in the early years of the third century, Rabbi Judah the Nasi ("prince," or "patriarch"), resolved to reduce the oral Torah to writing. . . . Then in about 220 A. D., he introduced the first authoritative summary of the rabbinic tradition to that date. This was the *Mishna* ("repetition"). The Mishna, based upon the laws of the Hebrew Bible, is the source of all subsequent Jewish law to the present day and is an object of study in the academies of all the forms of Judaism.

[6] See William Whiston, *The Antiquities of the Jews,* Bk. XIII, Ch. X, Sect. 6, Par. 297, in *The Works of Josephus*, New Updated Edition (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1987), 355.

[7] Frederick J. Murphy, *The Religious World of Jesus: An Introduction to Second Temple Palestinian Judaism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 223.

[8] See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 377, where he has an interesting comment about the six thousand Pharisees:

> We do not know for sure how many Pharisees there were in the time of Jesus. The figure of six thousand, often quoted in this context from Josephus *Antiquities* 17.42, refers specifically to the Pharisees who refused to take the oath of allegiance to Caesar, some time in the reign of Herod the Great. In the forty years or so between that incident and the time of Jesus several important political events had taken place, which might well

have induced many more to join the movement. We may assume that there were in any case plenty of Pharisees who were not involved with the particular incident in question, and more again who were generally sympathetic to the movement.

[9] Josephus, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Bk. 17, Ch. 2, Sect. 4, Par. 41-42, in *Josephus*, 453. I am indebted to Frederick J. Murphy for this citation.

[10] Scheindlin, *Jewish People*, 40. His statement about "ever-increasing complexity" reminds one of Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees: They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them (Matthew 23:4).

[11] W. D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 30.

[12] Ibid., 31.

[13] Ibid., 87.

[14] North, *Tradition*, 86. See also Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics,* expanded edition with replies to critics (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1984), where he says, "These radical commands (vv. 21-48) do not supercede the Older Testamental law; they illustrate and explain it. . . . The law demanded inner sanctification and its outward expression; the scribes and Pharisees disregarded the former and perverted the latter."

[15] Ed Glasscock, *Moody Gospel Matthew Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 116.

[16] Donald A. Hagner, Word Biblical Commentary, vol., 33a, *Matthew 1—13* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1993), 111.

[17] See Rosenberg, *Judaism*, 67; Murphy, *Jesus*, 235.

[18] This combination is called the Babylonian Talmud.

[19] North, *Tradition*, 84-105. See also Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, translated from the Hebrew by Chaya Galai (USA: Basic Books, 1976), where he explains the Talmud:

> The formal definition of the Talmud is the summary of oral law that evolved after centuries of scholarly effort by sages who lived in Palestine and Babylonia until the beginning of the Middle Ages. It has two main components: the Mishnah, a book of *halakhah* (law) written in Hebrew; and the commentary on the Mishnah, known as the Talmud (or Gemarah), in the limited sense of the word, a summary of discussion and elucidation of the Mishnah written in Aramaic-Hebrew jargon.
>
> This explanation, however, though formally correct, is misleading and imprecise. The Talmud is the repository of thousands of years of Jewish wisdom, and the oral law, which is as ancient and significant as the written law (the Torah), finds expression therein.

[20] C. M. Pilkington, *Judaism* (US: NTC Publishing Group, 1995), 37. For a copy of the Mishnah, see Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[21] See Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth 63a* , in *The Soncino Talmud* [CD-ROM]. Available from Davaka's Judaic Software, item no., Win CD #1W691B, call 1-800-621-8227 for this CD, cost $299.00, [accessed 3 March 1999]. I am indebted to North for this citation; see North, *Tradition*, 86-87. Also see North for many examples as illustrated above in his

book, *Ibid., 84-105.*

[22] Rosenberg, *Judaism*, 61.

[23] See E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE—66 CE*, (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 388-412, for a detailed study of the influence and control the Pharisees had in the first century.

[24] See also Galatians 1:13f.; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Acts 8:3; 9:1, 21; 22:4, 19; 26:10f.; 1 Thessalonians 2:14f.; Galatians 4:29; 6:12.

[25] Lavinia and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *A Popular Dictionary of Judaism* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1997), 87.

[26] Albert A. Bell, *Exploring the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide to the World of Jesus and the First Christians,* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 37.

[27] Scheindlin*, Jewish People*, 52. See also Lavinia, "Johanan ben Zakkai," in *Judaism*, 88.

[28] Scheindlin, *Jewish People*, 53.

[29] Lavinia, "Pharisee," in *Judaism*, 134.

[30] Rosenberg, *Judaism*, 66.

[31] Sanders, *Judaism*, 400.

[32] See David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 48-55. See also Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1—13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol., 33a (Texas: Word Book, 1993), lxxiii—lxxv, for caution on both sides of the issue of dating. See also D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 75-81, for a conservative view on the provenance, date, and destination of the Gospel of Matthew.

[33] D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in Frank E. Gaebelein, vol., 8, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 22.

[34] Carson, "Matthew," in *Bible Commentary*, 20.

[35] Murphy, *Jesus*, 232.

[36] Ibid.. 234.

[37] Sanders, *Judaism*, 413.

[38] Ibid., 412.

False Prophets: Who are They?

Thrust statement: **False prophets are not necessarily individuals who fail to properly interpret the Scriptures.**

Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8; Romans 14:1—15:7[1]

INTRODUCTION

As one reflects upon the phrase "false prophets," one wonders what comes to the minds of most Christians? This expression is frequently employed very loosely among some Christian fellowships. How do you utilize this phrase? Is a false prophet someone who disagrees with your particular brand of orthodoxy? This phrase only occurs seven times in the New Testament.[2] One objective of this study is to analyze the seven occurrences of this phrase in each of the passages in order to ascertain the proper use of this term. The primary focus of the first installment (**1 John 4:1-3**) of this study is to examine the relationship of understanding to eternal salvation. In other words, is absolute knowledge prerequisite to salvation? Is freedom from error an unquestionable qualification to eternal life? Can one be misguided in his or her interpretation of the Scriptures and still spend eternity with God?

Many Christians tend to confuse their interpretation of Scripture with the Scripture itself. If some believer disagrees with another believer, it is not uncommon for one to designate the other as unsound or a false prophet. As one reads the words *false prophets* in the seven occurrences in the New Testament, one's presuppositions (assumptions) are frequently read into the Scriptures rather than being read out of the Scriptures. In order for one to interpret these passages correctly, one must unpack the biblical witnesses within the historical settings. It is this factor—our distance from the biblical writers in time and culture—that demands that we become good exegetes, if we are truly to understand the meaning of Scripture. We must wrestle with their use of words, syntax, and literary forms, which express their ideas, and we must hear those ideas within both the author's cultural contexts and presuppositions, if we are to recognize adequately what they intended by their words.[3]

Christians often label those who disagree with their perception of the Scriptures as "false prophets." But does the Holy Spirit employ this expression in this manner? How can one determine who is and who is not a false teacher? Is one a sham teacher simply because one believes in instrumental music, handclapping in the assembly, solo singing, Sunday schools, individual communion cups, orphan homes, Bible colleges, and so on? Since Jesus warns against imitation prophets (**Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24**), believers do have a responsibility to identify those who come under this classification. Just how does one recognize a false teacher? Are there any criteria in the Scriptures that can assist one in making this determination?

ONE WHO IS NOT A FALSE TEACHER

1 John 4:1-3

If one can determine who is not a false teacher, then this understanding should help one in deciding who is a true teacher. First, a false teacher is not necessarily someone who disagrees with one's own interpretation of a particular passage of Scripture. In other words, a person who is mistaken is not necessarily a disloyal instructor. For instance, God has never made absolute perfection in knowledge a condition of fellowship with Him or His children. If so, no one could be in a right relationship with God or any one else for that matter. One is not a spurious guide because he or she fails to comprehend some truth that is not a condition for salvation. Just who is a false prophet? What do the Scriptures say? Well, John, the apostle, informs Christians that a false prophet/teacher is one who denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. In fact, he writes:

> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world (**1 John 4:1-3**).

For John, the antichrist or false teacher is one who denies that Jesus has come in the flesh. Is the antichrist one who believes in instrumental music? Is the antichrist one who believes in Sunday school"? Is the antichrist one who sings a solo in the assembly of the saints? As one seeks to unravel the mystery of the antichrist, the words of John are important in making one's determination as to who is and who is not the antichrist. How does John define the word *antichris*t? Is one an evil instructor or a wicked deceiver simply because one does not dot every "i" or cross every "t" in the Word of God exactly as some one else does. If so, every one is condemned. Perfection in knowledge is not a condition of salvation. Imperfection in knowledge does not necessarily mean that one is a false teacher. For example, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for not making allowances for shortcomings in understanding among some believers in the congregation:

> Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know**.** But the man who loves God is known by God (**I Corinthians 8:1-3**).

Paul is clearly dealing with insufficient knowledge. Forcefully, the apostle says that no man knows every thing as he ought, but, to the contrary, he does state emphatically that God knows the person who loves God. For Paul, God loves the person with limited knowledge as well as the person with clear insight. With Paul, as long as one loves God—in spite of deficiency in aptitude—this person is acceptable to God. This type person is still known by God, even with incorrect perception. The intent of the heart does play an important role in deciding who is and who is not acceptable to God. Again, Paul continues his line of reasoning with the weak Christian:

> So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. But not everyone knows this (**1 Corinthians 8:4-7a**).

Did Paul condemn these Christians with poverty of insight as false teachers? Does he not say that they are brothers? Paul goes right to the heart of arrogance and pride when he jots down the very heart of one's relationship to other Christians whose knowledge is far from perfect: "So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" (**1 Corinthians 8:11-12**). . There are certain principles that one can learn from the above citations from Scripture. For example, all truth is truth, but not all truth is essential to one's salvation. Another benchmark is, all error is error, but not all error will condemn one's soul. Paul does not teach that complete truth is prerequisite to redemption nor does he teach that all error will result in loss of salvation. Even though some of the Corinthians did not properly understand the teachings of God about the eating of meats, the keeping of certain holy days, or the nature of idols, yet not once did Paul indict the believers who misunderstood these truths as false teachers. In other words they were not accused of being dishonorable interpreters of the Word.

The general trend today is to equate anyone who differs with the status quo as being a false prophet. No room is made for honest differences if the dissimilarities are not kosher, at least according to some Bible interpreters. Again, this essay calls upon Paul to establish how one should react toward those whose knowledge is deficient in many areas. How did Paul deal with those who wanted to make correct interpretation the criteria by which one determines one's faithfulness or unfaithfulness to God? For this evaluation, the **Book of Romans**, **chapters 14** and **15**, is an excellent commentary on Paul's attitude in this matter of reception and rejection. Paul cogently writes:

> Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (**Romans 14:1-4**).

Paul did not denounce those who were mistaken in their thinking as being false

teachers or prophets. Some of the Christians were errorless in their thinking, at least in the above issues, and some were wrong? Did Paul advocate throwing the immature out of the synagogue as a means of rectifying inferior knowledge? Did he accuse them of being false teachers? What does Paul mean when he says, "Who are you to judge someone else's servant" (**14:4**)? How should one react to variations within the Christian community? Is there a Scripture that articulates this controversy of imperfection in understanding? Yes, Paul writes with exactness in setting forth what God expects of His children: "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (**14:5b**) This statement cuts away all underbrush of doubt as to the position that Christians should exercise in dealing with diversity within the company of redeemed ones.

Is Paul, once more, admonishing Christians not to enforce their views upon someone else as a test of fellowship? Just what is Paul saying in **14:5b**? This verse reads: "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." What did this statement mean in the first century? What does this weighty pronouncement mean in the twentieth-first century? Did Paul say, "Each one should be fully convinced in my mind or does he say his or her own mind?" Which is it? Is it my own mind or is it his or her own mind? Almost without exception, certain segments of God's community interpret this verse with—"my own mine," not "his or her own mind."

In **chapter 14** of **Romans**, Paul continues to chide the brethren for passing judgment on others. He puts it graphically as he seeks to stop division dead in its tracts:

> For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother**?** Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat (**Romans 14:9-10**).

CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon for some religious journals to frequently judge their brothers and sisters, even though Paul asked the question: "Why do you judge your brother?" Paul wanted this unholy deciding of condemnation against differences to stop. This Scripture is still violated in many fellowships. One still observes, almost on a daily basis, the various subdivisions of certain splinter groups that exercise judgment of ostracism against anyone who does not maintain the status quo—the judging does not stop! Christians under the dominion of opinions have been made, as it were, to hate one another when opinions collide. It is advocated by some: "Agree with the status quo of a particular party, or else face persecution in the form of a write-up in a journal of orthodoxy and, at the same time, castigation from the 'true' fold." If one loves God, God loves this person in spite of weakness or dullness of intellect. Many Christians have forgotten that God is love. One can hardly fail to reflect upon the words of Jesus to Nicodemus when one thinks of God's love:

> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,[f] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. [18] Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of

God's one and only Son (**John 3:16-18**).[g]

Do you believe this? How can one believe the words of Jesus and, at the same time, believe that God would condemn a person whom He loves because he or she could not apprehend the tortuous interpretation of some passage according to a particular sectarian party. From a quick perusal of **Romans 14**, one discovers that Paul's discourse on fellowship goes to great length to arrest this judging. In fact, Paul puts pen to paper as he seeks to curb an attitude that is disruptive of the unity for which Jesus prayed: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another" (**14:13**). Does this principle of not judging apply to the twentieth-first century? Do you judge other Christians? How do Christians go about rejecting the implications of this chapter concerning differences in regard to fellowship? How can you implement this objectivity of toleration for misunderstanding of Scripture into the life of the church for the twentieth-first century? Do you violate Paul's words about judging?

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[1] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

[2] Matthew 7:15; 24: 11, 24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1.

[3] Gordon D. Fee, ***Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*** (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), 26.

f Or *his only begotten Son*

g Or *God~s only begotten Son*

False Prophets: Who are They?

Thrust Statement: **Paul appeals for unity in diversity among Christians.**

Scripture Reading: **Romans 14 and 15; I Corinthians 8.**

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Part two of this series is not dealing specifically with one of the seven occurrences of the term *false prophets* as employed in the New Testament. This essay focuses on two chapters in the **Book of Romans** and one chapter in the **Book of First Corinthians** in order to set the stage for a correct understanding of the subject of false prophets within the Christian community. These three chapters are pivotal to one's concept of unity in diversity, not unity in conformity, within the company of the redeemed. An understanding of these three chapters should assist one in identifying accurately the use of the term, or phrase, that is so loosely employed by many sincere Christians that is not biblical. It is significant that in **Romans 14 and 15** that Paul does not indict believers as dishonorable interpreters or as false teachers for their lack of clear perception concerning the eating of meats and the keeping of certain holy days to the Lord. Even in the Corinthian Letter, Paul did not castigate the Corinthians for their not fully grasping the utter futility of idols (**1 Corinthians 8**).[1]

The Corinthians were one because they believed in Jesus. They believed the Gospel facts—Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:1-8**). Their salvation was not contingent upon the acuteness of the human intellect or the logical powers of the mind to sort out all the problems encountered in their acceptance of Jesus as the Way of salvation. Yes, it was belief of and response to historical facts about Jesus that resulted in salvation by grace through faith, not adherence to opinions reliant upon the sharpness of one's human brainpower. Christianity is founded upon three leading facts: (1) Jesus Christ was crucified upon Mount Calvary, (2) His body was deposited in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and (3) He did actually rise from the dead on the third day. Christianity does not consist in matters of opinions, but upon facts.

First Corinthians 8

If one professes Christianity, but, at the same time, does not understand that there is only one God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ (**1 Corinthians 8:4-6**), one wonders

how the Christian community today would have reacted to his or her lack of understanding in the first century. Would the church today have accepted such individuals into the fellowship of the local congregation? Would today's fellowship of Christians have accused these individuals of being false teachers or false prophets? How did Paul react to this lack of comprehension about God? Just a casual reading of **First Corinthians 8** reveals that many did not fully grasp the belief that there is just one God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ. Did Paul point the finger at them and lay the epithet of "false prophets" on them for their deficiency of discernment? How does one stack this unpleasant mix-up about doctrine in Corinth with the many questions that carve up God's people into so many warring factions today?

Some of the Corinthians understood correctly, but, on the other hand, some believers still did not recognize accurately the identity of God. How did Paul deal with such absence in knowledge? He begins this chapter by admitting: "we all possess knowledge" (**8:1b**). Is correct understanding the most important issue in the life of the believer? What happens when one person's knowledge exceeds that of another? What is the most worthy characteristic that exemplifies one's favor with God? Is it knowledge or is it love? Paul goes right to the heart of what Christian fellowship is all about: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (**8:1c**). Do you say, "I know that I am right?" Is fellowship based upon a relationship with Jesus through faith or is fellowship based upon perfection in knowledge? Listen to Paul once more as he seeks to set the record straight: "The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know" (**8:2**). Regarding this same concept, Carl Ketcherside writes with justification:

> Those who were in Christ in the days of the apostles were in error on many points. They were mistaken about a lot of things but they were not charged with "preaching another gospel." Freedom from error is not a condition of salvation else all men would be damned. We are not saved by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge but by faith in Christ Jesus. It is by belief of facts related to him, and not by grasp of abstract truth, that we are justified before God. Certainly it is not by performance of meritorious deeds nor by legalistic conformity. When we postulate a program of justification by knowledge we hang ourselves on the gallows we have constructed to rid ourselves of others, unless we are prepared to make ourselves even more ridiculous by affirming that we know as much as God.[2]

Do you know everything you ought to know? What is God concerned about? Again, Paul, through the Holy Spirit, plunges headlong into the very heart of what matters with God: "But the man who loves God is known by God" (**8:3**). If a person loves God, God loves this person in spite of his or her lack of perfection in knowledge. Paul now argues that it is true that there is only one God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ, but, at the same time, he stresses that not everyone knows this (**8:7**). How did Paul behave in response to those who were correct in their thinking? He says: "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak (**8:9**). Are you following the example of Paul in this matter? Paul, as he seeks to summarize the attitude of toleration, cuts away all underbrush about one's own path:

> So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of

God— [33] even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. [1] Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ (**10:31-33**).

Paul exercised the spirit of open-mindedness for shortage of knowledge within the fellowship of God's new community. He followed the example of Christ. Do you follow the pattern of Christ? What did Christ do? Paul describes Christ's spirit of liberality and generosity in the Roman Letter. One can hardly read this statement of Paul in **1 Corinthians 10:31-33** without reflection upon his conclusion to **chapter fourteen in Romans**:

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. [2] Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. [3] For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."[c] [4] For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. [5] May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, [6] so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. [7] Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (**Romans 15:1-7**).

Romans 14 and 15

False teachers are not by definition those whose knowledge is inadequate. To require that one have perfect knowledge of every detail of God's Word in order to be a trustworthy teacher is to insist on inerrancy and infallibility, an impossible task, even for the most highly trained in the field of biblical interpretation. To expect such an accomplishment is to demand that one be God. **Romans 14** is a chapter on how to maintain unity in diversity. There will always be differences within the Christian community; therefore, believers ought not to denounce one another as dishonest guides when they do not dot every "i" or cross every "t" in the same way.

Christians can no more all think alike than they can all look alike. God has never made absolute perfection in knowledge a condition of salvation; otherwise, no one could be saved. On the other hand, one can also say that absolute freedom from error is not a condition of salvation either; otherwise, no one could be saved. Christians are one because God has reconciled humanity unto Himself in and through Jesus, not through intellectual attainment. Toleration for differences of opinions is the subject of **Romans 14 and 15**, not absolute conformity in belief with other believers, whether right or wrong.

Within the natural realm as well as the spiritual realm, one recognizes that there are infants, children, young men, and fathers in both domains, and, as a result of these separations, misinterpretations exist in one's endeavor to understand God's Word more perfectly. This diversity resides in both worlds—secular and spiritual—because of the discrepancy of age, the degree of education, cultural background (physical and spiritual), and many other factors. And, as a result of this individuality in perception, distinctions in sharpness are unavoidable.[3]

Is misapprehension of God's Word defiance against God? No! Misunderstanding of

God's Word is not rebellion; an honest mistake of the heart is not mutiny. There is distinctiveness between a guileless infraction of the heart and uprising against God. It is not right to castigate (haul over the coals) someone just because one thinks that his or her knowledge is more accurate or more developed than someone else's knowledge. One should never exclude another human being from fellowship because of a condition of mental deficiency, or feeble-mindedness, that is to say, one who does not assent to the opinion of the disputing person. Christians are not divided over the essentials—Gospel facts—but rather they are on bad terms over issues they have inherited from traditions. Christians should practice unity in diversity as advanced by Paul in his admonition to the believers in Rome and Corinth.

In **Romans, chapter 14**, Paul develops the concept of unity in diversity and forcefully concludes with the following counsel:

> We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (**15:1-7**).[4]

Who are the strong? Who are the weak? Were the weak false teachers? Were the strong true teachers? Does inaccuracy in doctrine automatically make one a corruptible teacher? Does it not all depend on what the teaching is? Were some wrong in their sensitivity about the keeping of certain days holy to the Lord or the legality of eating certain meats? Were some correct in their views while others were mistaken in their views? What does fellowship mean? What does endorsement mean?

Can one be in fellowship with another person and not necessarily subscribe to the totality of what the other person believes? Are individuals in fellowship with persons or things? Which? Should one equate fellowship and endorsement as one and the same? For example, do you consider yourself in fellowship with God? If so, do you maintain that God endorsees everything you believe or do? Who would be so foolish as to make such a claim? If one can be in fellowship with God without God endorsing everything one believes or does, can one not be in fellowship with other believers without endorsing everything the other believes?

What does it mean to exercise "a spirit of unity"? What does it mean to glorify God "with one heart and mouth"? What does it mean to "accept one another . . . just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God"? How does God accept you? Does he not approve of you with warts and all? Should not Christians take in other believers with warts and all? Has God received you with imperfection in your knowledge and famine in your daily living? Are Christians to receive others with shortage in their knowledge and fallibility in their daily living? These are questions that every sincere believer must address. The Holy Spirit nails the coffin shut about these issues: "Accept

one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (**Romans 15:7**).

Again, from the Scriptures, one determines that a false prophet is not automatically someone who has deficiency in understanding. But the question that still confronts every Christian is: How does one settle from Scripture who is or who is not a spurious prophet/teacher?[5] What meaning should one attach to the various Scriptures that speak of false prophets? The first step in explaining Scripture is to read the text. To fathom a passage involves the immediate context, the remote context, and the larger context. The *immediate context* includes verses preceding and following the reference that one is studying. On the other hand, the *remote context* may take in the entire book in which the text is found. Also, the *larger contex*t may embrace the whole of God's written revelation. This understanding of contexts helps to determine the meaning or meanings that one attaches to any distinct phrase. Otherwise, the interpreter may impose conjectured convictions on a text without due reflection upon what the author says. Without a conception of context, a person's particular context tends to shape his or her understanding and interpretation of the message.

WHO IS A FALSE PROPHET?

The first part of this essay analyzed **First Corinthians 8** and **Romans 14** in order to determine how Paul dealt with differences within the various congregations. These conflicts did not discuss the philosophy of those who sought to undermine the very foundation of Christianity, namely, Jesus as the Messiah, such as **First John 4:1-3**. When one denies that Jesus is the Christ, one is denying the very foundation on which Christianity stands (**2 John 7-11**). John goes right to the jugular vein in dealing with false teachers. In fact, he pinpoints, without equivocation, the error of false teachers:

> I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also (**1 John 2:21-23**).

John calls attention to the errors of the false teachers, but, on the other hand, it is significant that Paul did not accuse those individuals who were wrong in Corinth (**1 Corinthians, chapter 8**) and Rome (**Romans**, **chapters 14 and 15**) as being false teachers, for he called them brothers. As one returns once more to John, one soon discovers that John continues to develop the identification of false teachers in his Second Epistle. In his Second Epistle he deals with Gnostic teaching that denied that Jesus came in the flesh; he does not discuss unity in diversity over peripherals (non-essentials) as Paul did in **Romans** and **First Corinthians**. Consider John's warning:

> Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this

> teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work (**2 John 7-11**).

CONCLUSION

Who is the false teacher? Who is the deceiver? Who is the antichrist? John says that the deceivers, the antichrists, are those "who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (**2 John 7**). It is at this point that John issues a strong admonition to not receive anyone who "comes to you and does not bring this teaching" (**v.10**). Just as John did not contemplate the issues that Paul discussed in **First Corinthians 8** and **Romans 14 and 15**, neither did Jude, our Lord's brother, write about these issues in his discourse on false teachers. Paul, in dealing with unity in diversity, did not approach the works of the flesh addressed in the book of Jude concerning false teachers. On the other hand, neither did Jude deal with unity in diversity, but rather, with a denial of God's Word in the lives of men and women and a denial of Jesus as Lord. Think about the words of Jude:

> For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, *who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality* and *deny Jesus Christ* our only Sovereign and Lord (**Jude 4**).

Paul also warned again *false teachers*, even as John, Jude, and Peter. But, one should not apply the phrase *false teacher* to one who is contending for the faith (Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection) once delivered to the saints, as recorded by Jude (**Jude 3**). Paul did not so employ the term (false teacher/prophet) in his discussion of diversity within the Corinthian and Roman congregations, as noted above. These difficulties in Corinth and Rome, in and of themselves, did not deny the Messiahship of Jesus, did not deny that Jesus had come in the flesh, and did not reject the principles of morality upon God's people. One who denies that Jesus is the Christ, one who denies the incarnation of Christ, and one who turns the grace of God into a license for sexual immorality—this one is a false teacher. Are you following the example of Christ and Paul in your relationship with other believers who do not know as much as you know?

Again, the question that confronts every believer is: False Prophets: Who Are They? How do you respond to this question? Do you still answer this question based upon whether or not one agrees or disagrees with your brand of orthodoxy? The following lengthy quote from Alexander Campbell's (1788-1866) writings should help one to see the fallacy of making salvation contingent upon absolute perfection in knowledge a condition of salvation:

Diversity in Knowledge

> Amongst Christians there is now, as there was at the beginning, a very great diversity in the knowledge of the Christian institution. There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the Apostle John. This, from the natural gifts of God, from the diversities of age, education, and circumstances, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural to excommunicate one another, because our knowledge is less or

greater than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion or matters of speculation?

Indeed, in most cases where proscription[6] and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy, (of which, however, for consistency's sake, he must be accused,) is, in truth, the real cause of separation.

If God has bestowed better gifts or better opportunities on one man than another, by which he has attained more knowledge, instead of thanking God for his kindness to the community, they beg God to take him away; and if he will not be so unkind, they will at length put him from among them under the charge of heresy. In most instances the greatest error of which a brother can be guilty, is to study his Bible more than his companions—or, at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ.[7]

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[1] Churches of Christ do not generally follow this advice of Paul to the Corinthians as a whole. For example, in the earlier part of this author's ministry, he was associated with the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement. This writer sought to stay within this fellowship, but to no avail. For one to remain in this particular alliance and to enjoy participation as a faithful member, one had to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that one would go to hell for using individual communion cups and for sharing in Sunday school. Correct worship was not sufficient for salvation; one also had to know that the use of cups and Sunday school were sinful. But, on the other hand, this author soon discovered that the same mindset existed among the cups and Sunday school churches. This group (cups and Sunday school) also took a strong position against instrumental music. But this fellowship was/is as dogmatic about one's views concerning instrumental music as were the one-cup and non-Sunday school party against Sunday school and individual communion cups. It is not sufficient, according to some, to worship without the instrument, one must also know that singing acapella is the only way to please God; otherwise, there is no fellowship with God. Fellowship, among many churches, is generally based upon one's correct understanding of whatever the party line advocates, nothing else is tolerated.

[2] Carl Ketcherside, "Another Gospel," *Mission Messenger* 27, no 1 (January 1965): 6-7.

c Psalm 69:9

[3] This author observes, at least within many Churches of Christ, that the greatest blunder that a brother or sister can be guilty of, is to study his Bible more than his or her associates, or at least to outshine them in the knowledge of the Word. Instead of thanking God for allowing such persons into their midst, they usually plead with God to take them away. And, if God will not be so kind as to remove him or her out of the church, the so-called correct thinkers will at length disfellowship the inexact in understanding under

the charge of heresy.

[4] All Scripture citations are from the New International Version, unless stated otherwise.

[5] Simply reciting Scriptures that draw attention to "false teachers" is not sufficient to determine who the "false teachers" are. One such example of this perception of Scripture citation is by Allen Bailey, one cup and non-Sunday school preacher, a man who loves the Lord. In one essay, he cites thirty-six Scriptures to document the importance of this subject—and it is an important subject. No one denies these passages, but some deny his conclusions. Every Scripture he recalls is the Word of God, but one must not equate his interpretation with the Word itself. Remember that the context is the determining factor in trying to arrive at a correct insight. One must not employ these Scriptures in a way the Holy Spirit did not employ them. It is not Bailey's intention to misrepresent the Word of God, but, it appears, so it seems to this author, that he has not carefully viewed the kind of errors or behavior addressed in the verses cited. In this article, he writes about "False Doctrines of the Twentieth Century." After one's reading, one cannot but stand in awe at many of his conclusions. See Allen Bailey, "False Teachers," in *Preachers' Study Notes: 1994 Preachers' Study* (Buffalo, Missouri: Christian's Expositor Publications, 1996).

[6] Proscription: An imposed restraint or restriction—PROHIBITION

[7] Alexander Campbell, "To Mr. William Jones, of London, Letter IV," *Millennial Harbinger* 6, no. 3 (March 1835): 112.

False Prophets: Who are They?

Thrust Statement: **False prophets are those who lead men away from God.**

Scripture Reading: **Matthew. 7:15**

INTRODUCTION

As stated in Part One, it is significant that the phrase *false prophet* only appears seven times in the New Testament, not always with the same connotation.[1] A careful reading of the Scriptures that contain this phrase is quite revealing. One quickly discovers that the phrase is employed in the context of those who lead men away from God through the denial of Jesus as the Messiah, or through ethical conduct that does not glorify God, or through claiming to be the Messiah Himself.[2] Even when writers of the New Testament do not employ this expression (false prophets) to warn believers about the teachings and practices of certain men and women, one is not left in the dark as to the concerns of the writers in calling attention to behavior and beliefs that will damn one's soul (see **Revelation 2:18-29**). This section of the essay seeks to understand this utterance as employed by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount.

As one reads this examination of **Matthew 7:15**, hopefully, one will not allow his or her own prior frame of reference to be the determining factor in seeking to understand this most abused text. Christians frequently, though unconsciously, employ the Bible to prove a biased perspective against anyone who does not toe-the-line in harmony with their particular fellowship. The interpreter lives in his or her own subjective world. If one wishes to unpack **Matthew 7:15**, one must be committed to the context. Many groups within the Stone/Campbell Movement utilize this Scripture to justify separation from other believers over points that God has never addressed; especially, one's attitude toward a so-called worship service with it five ritualistic acts. Duncan Ferguson is correct when he writes: "Whenever anyone attempts to 'hear' what the text has to say, that person inevitably hears and identifies the sounds from within a prior structure of experiences or preunderstanding."[3]

EXPOSITION OF THE PHRASE *FALSE PROPHETS* IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Just a perusal of Matthew's Gospel reveals that this phrase is only employed three times, each time by Jesus (**7:15; 24:11, 24**).[4] It is significant that in all three occurrences, the phrase is applied to those who seek to lead people away God. But in **Matthew 7:15**, the emphasis on false prophets is associated with the Pharisees and the Scribes (teachers of the Law). After the baptism of Jesus, one finds Jesus in Galilee. It is in this geographical location that one discovers Jesus' preaching His now famous Sermon known as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus warns His disciples about a righteousness that is external, a righteousness that does not proceed from the heart. Toward the end of His Sermon, Jesus speaks of the religious leaders with a stinging rebuke:

> Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? (**Matthew 7:15-16**).[5]

What precipitated this warning and condemnation of the religious leaders? As one reads carefully the Sermon on the Mount, one quickly discovers that Jesus is dealing with the ethical behavior of the leaders in Israel. In this Sermon, Jesus begins by expounding upon the characteristics that must be visible in the life of His followers. In setting forth kingdom behavior, Jesus gives a contrast between the conduct of the religious leaders of His day and the performance God expects of His people. In this antithesis, one is immediately introduced to the distinctiveness of "false teachers" versus uniqueness of "true teachers."

Jesus initiates His Sermon on the Mount with patterns of behavior that true prophets/teachers will practice and encourage others to carry out. In this renowned Sermon, Jesus commences with actions that exemplifies behavior that pleases God: (1) "Blessed are the poor in spirit" [**Matthew 5:3**]; "Blessed are those who mourn" [**5**:**4**]; "Blessed are the meek" [**5:5**]; "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" [**5:**6]; "Blessed are the merciful" [**5:7**]; "Blessed are the pure in heart" [**5:8**]; "Blessed are the peacemakers" [**5:9**]. In these beatitudes, Jesus stresses that one must be bankrupt in spirit, humble in attitude, gentle in lifestyle, hungering and thirsting after holiness, exhibiting mercy, developing purity, and seeking to promote peace, not discord.

The true teacher longs for the virtues that belong to God. After enumerating the beatitudes, Jesus continues to explain to His disciples how men and women are to put into practice right conduct that gives pleasure to God. He demonstrates this by giving detailed instructions concerning murder (**5:21-26**), adultery (**5:27-30**), divorce (**5:31-32**), oaths (**5:33-37**), retaliation (**5:38-42**), behavior toward enemies (**5:43-48**), correct motive in giving (**6:1-4**), proper attitude in prayer (**6:5-15**), legitimate aim in fasting (**6:16-18**), setting proper priorities (**6:19-24**), disposition of trust in God (**6:25-34**), and an admonition to put an end to censorious judging (**7:1-6**).

Sandwiched between the beatitudes (**5:1-16**) and the erroneous teachings of the "Pharisees and the teachers of the law" (**5:21—7:1-6**), Jesus gives a synopsis of the relevancy of the law (**5:17-20**). To set the tone for a proper interpretation of the phrase

false prophets in **Matthew 7:15**, the first employment of this phrase in Matthew's Gospel, it is necessary to eliminate difficulties that stand in the way of listening anew to the biblical text. One needs to cut his teeth on the concrete meaning of "false prophets" in the light of its context, not church tradition.

What did Jesus say about the Pharisees and the teachers of the law? Were these men the "false prophets" in **Matthew 7:15**? Is not **Matthew 7:15** the climax of the Sermon on the Mount, along with the two illustrations of the wise and foolish builders? Is Jesus not warning against the behavioral habits of the religious leaders of His day? Did He not say, "By their fruit you will recognize them" (**7:16**)? Were the religious leaders concerned about justice and mercy, about the poor and the widows? Or were they more concerned about rituals than they were about things that mattered to God? Jesus called upon the disciples to reevaluate and reinterpret what had been handed down to them through the "tradition of the elders." The religious leaders of that day, equivalent to preachers of our day, were so used to reading the Scriptures as they had been taught by generations of interpreters that they identified their interpretation with the Word of God itself.

An excellent illustration of identification of one's interpretation with the Word of God is from Jesus' skirmish with the "Pharisees and teachers of the law" (**15:1**) over "the tradition of the elders" (**Matthew 15:1-20**). These "Pharisees and teachers of the law" questioned Jesus about His disciples' behavior concerning the "tradition of the elders" (**15:2**), and, in response to their question, Jesus rebuked them for their substitution of tradition for the "command of God" (**15:3**). This observation should prepare one to understand more clearly Jesus' attention to the law in His Sermon. The "traditions of the elders" made it almost impossible to read the Bible without spectacles. Thus, Jesus, in His Sermon, went right to the heart of the matter in calling attention to the "false prophets":

> Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 5:17-20**).

In this pericope (section), Jesus draws a contrast between two kinds of people. Apparently, there were those who did not keep the commandments of God and, at the same time, taught others to break them (See also **15:1-20**). On the other hand, there were those who practiced and taught the commandments of God. Again, it is the individuals who taught others to break God's commandments whom Jesus addressed toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount (**7:15**). Beginning with **Matthew 5:21** and concluding with **Matthew 5:48**, Jesus contrasted His teachings with the teachings of the religious leaders. He begins by calling attention to what they had heard from the teachers of the law: "You

have heard that it was said to the people long ago" (**5:21**); on the other hand, Jesus gives the true interpretation of the law by saying: "But I tell you" (**5:22**).[6]

Since Jesus dealt with the "Pharisees and the teachers of the law" in His Sermon on the Mount, this understanding should facilitate a clearer view of these false teachers by acquainting oneself with their known behavior. Just what role do the Pharisees and Scribes (teachers of the law) play in Matthew's narrative about Christ? It is worthy of note that Matthew opens his book with John's confrontation with these religious leaders (**Matthew 3**) and closes his book with Jesus' strong rebuke of these same Pharisees and teachers of the law (**Matthew 23**).[7] This group plays such a major role in Jesus' ministry that Matthew introduces his readers to this group of religious leaders in the inauguration of John's ministry:

> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance (**3:7-8**).

John the Baptist called upon the Pharisees and Sadducees to "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (**3:8**). In this same matter, Jesus, after cataloging a list of fruits, said, "By their fruit you will recognize them" (**7:15**). As mentioned above, Jesus begins his Sermon with a reference to the "Pharisees and teachers of the law" (**5:20**). On two other occasions (**12:38** and **15:1**), Matthew combines the Pharisees and teachers of the law in a confrontation with Jesus. In one of these wars of words, they wanted a sign from heaven to authenticate Jesus as the Messiah. But, once more, Jesus exposed their hypocrisy (**12:38-45**). These religious leaders play an important role in Matthew's account of Jesus' ministry. For example, Matthew employs the term "Pharisees" twenty-eight times and the phrase "teachers of the law" nineteen times[8]

The First Major Controversy

To assist one in his or her understanding of **Matthew 7:15**, one needs to reread Matthew's Gospel in order to get a bird's-eye view of the whole scenario of Jesus' encounter with the religious leaders. The first major controversy with the religious leaders occurs in **Matthew 9**. In this chapter, Jesus rebukes the leaders of Israel for their "insincerity." Jesus had just performed a number of miracles (**chapter 8**): for instance, [1] He healed a man with leprosy (**8:1-4**); [2] He healed the centurion's servant (**8:5-13**); [3] He healed Peter's mother-in-law and cast out demons and healed all the sick (**8:14-17**); [4] He calmed the storm (**8:28-34**); [5] He healed two demon-possessed men (**8:28-34**); and, finally, He healed a paralytic (**9:1-2**).

As a result of these miracles, the leaders of Israel reacted negatively toward His healing ministry. Immediately following the healing of the paralytic (**9:1-2**), Jesus reacted strongly toward their inner thoughts. Matthew writes: "At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, 'This fellow is blaspheming!'" (**9:3**). Notice that this accusation of blasphemy was not verbalized but remained within their own evil minds. But Jesus looked into the inner recesses of their depraved minds and said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?" (**9:4**). For the first time in Matthew's Gospel, the religious leaders and Jesus have direct contact. These controversies

foreshadowed the final significant debate that Jesus had with the leaders of Israel. Jesus' ministry began with conflict and ended with conflict.

The Last Major Controversy

This last argument took place during the last week of Jesus' ministry. The following is a brief summary of the events that transpired during Jesus' final week:

- The Triumphal Entry (**21:1-11**)
- The Cleansing of the Temple (**21:12-17**)
- The Last Controversies with the Jewish Leaders (**21:18—23:39**)
- The Olivet Discourse concerning the End of the Age (**chapters 24-25**)
- The Anointing of Jesus' Feet (**26:11-13**)
- The Arrest, Trials, and Death of Jesus (**26:14—27:66**)
- The Resurrection (**chapter 28**)

During this final week (Passion Week), the hostilities with the religious leaders escalate (**chapters 21-23**), and then they put Him to death (**chapters 26-27**). These leaders continue to see themselves as the lawful leaders of Israel and, at the same time, the legitimate interpreters of Scripture and the official holders of their religious heritage or traditions. **Chapter 21** narrates [1] Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (**21:1-11**), [2] Jesus at the temple (**21:12-17**), and [3] the withering of the fig tree (**21:18-22**). It was then, according to Matthew, that the chief priest and elders questioned the authority of Jesus: "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?" (**21:23**).

Again, as in His earlier major encounter with the religious leaders, He exposes them for their hypocrisy. To begin with, Jesus questioned them about the origin of John's baptism (**21:24-27**). In their response, they revealed their true character in the same way that they had manifested when they went out to hear John the Baptist preach in the wilderness (**3:7-10**). Prior to this last great controversy (**chapters 21-23**), Jesus had previously, according to the apostle John, brought to their attention two facts: [1] that their existence did not originate in God, and [2] that their allegiance belonged to Satan (**John 8:13, 44**).

Matthew, too, records the head-on clash that led to Jesus' allegations (**Matthew 21-22**). Following the narration of this clash, Matthew gives the reaction of the religious leaders concerning Jesus' parables: "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them" (**21:45**). Matthew further informs his readers that "they looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet" (**21:46**). Earlier, in the beginning of His ministry, the disciples of Jesus had cautioned Jesus about His remarks against the Pharisees.

> Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?" He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a

pit" (**15:12-14**).

This final controversy with the religious leaders was not something new with Jesus.[9] The climax of Jesus' ministry concludes with his final denunciation of these false prophets. Matthew, once more, as he brings to an end his Gospel, opens this discourse of controversy with Jesus' questioning these evil leaders. For example, He interrogates these insincere men about John's baptism, as stated above, and after their refusal to answer His question about John's baptism (**21:24-27**), He responds with three parables that condemn these dishonest leaders: [1] The Parable of the Two Sons (**21:28-32**); [2] The Parable of the Tenants (**21:33-46**); and [3] The Parable of the Wedding Banquet (**22:1-11**).

The Parable of the Two Sons

> "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'" 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him (**21:28-32**).

In the Parable of the Two Sons (**21:28-32**), He rebukes the Jewish leaders for their refusal to change their minds and believe, even though they had seen God at work in Him. As one reads Matthew's narrative of the events, one cannot help but wonder if his readers did not reflect upon these same leaders in the prologue to his Gospel when he wrote:

> When he [Herod] had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel'" (**2:4-6**).

This Parable of the Two Sons is a slap-in-the-face against the false prophets in **Matthew 7:15**—and they knew it. Following this parable, Jesus presented another parable—The Parable of the Tenants.

The Parable of the Tenants

> Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the

> tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:" 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet (**21:33-46**).

In this second parable (**21:33-46**), Jesus demonstrates that the leaders of Israel failed to meet their responsibilities to God (**21:34-36**). Even when God sent His Son, they rejected Him (**21:37-40**). With these parables, Jesus places the religious leaders in the history of rejection of God's Anointed One. God is now giving the vineyard to those who will accept Jesus (**21:41-44**). Matthew makes known to his readers that the leaders knew that these three parables were spoken against them (**21:45**). Instead of repentance, the leaders looked for a way to arrest Him (**21:46**). These leaders are the false prophets of **Matthew 7:15**. Once more, Jesus presented another parable to draw attention to their rejection of the One whom God sent—The Parable of the Wedding Banquet.

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

> Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' "But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him

outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
"For many are invited, but few are chosen" (**22:1-18**).

In this third parable (**22:1-18**), Jesus makes the same point about the relationship of the religious leaders and God's kingdom. This parable is a direct rebuke against the leaders. The major themes of this parable are: [1] The king prepares a wedding banquet (**22:2**); [2] those invited find excuses not to attend and, then kill those sent with invitations (**22:3-6**); [3] the king responds by destroying their city as punishment[10] and invites outsiders to attend (**22:8-10**); and [4] the leaders are warned that if they do not dress properly, then they will be thrown out (**22:11-14**). Over and again, Jesus nails the coffin shut on these false teachers in **Matthew 7:15**.

THE CONSPIRACY OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Now, four scenes follow these parables in which various combinations of the religious leaders combine their efforts to defeat and to put an end to this supposed troublemaker (**22:15-22**). The various sects combined their efforts to work together in order to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people. Immediately following the Parable of the Wedding Banquet, one observes the Pharisees and the Herodians in a clandestine operation to try to entrap Him. Matthew preserves this undercover operation for the extermination of Jesus.

Pharisees and Herodians

> Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away (**22:15-22**).

The first scene combines the Pharisees and the Herodians. These two groups schemed together to try to silence Him. They tried to lay a trap for Him over the payment of taxes to Caesar (**22:15-16**). Insincerity controls this pericope. In this showdown, Jesus calls these religious leaders hypocrites (**22:18**). Why did He call them hypocrites? Matthew informs his readers that Jesus knew "their evil intent" (**22:18**). In the next scene, one observes the extreme insincerity of the Sadducees in questioning Him about marital relationships after the resurrection.

Sadducees

> That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children

> for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching (**22:23-33**).

The second scene embraces the Sadducees questioning Him about marriage at the resurrection (**22:23-33**)—they did not believe in the resurrection (**22:23**). They were spiritually blind in their understanding of the Scriptures (**22:29-31**); they were also spiritually blind in that they did not understand the power of God (**22:29**). Again, one recognizes an underhanded manipulation to catch Him in an entanglement that they imagined was hopeless to escape. But they failed just as their cohorts' efforts also misfired in their attempt to try to get Him in hot water with the people or with the authorities. In the next episode, one looks at an expert in the law trying his hand.

A Pharisee: An Expert in the Law

> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (22:34-40).

The third episode involves their efforts to entrap Him over the greatest commandment in the law (**22:34-35**). Jesus knew that the Pharisees were devious, sly, dishonest, foxy, crooked and shrewd; He knew that this question was to test Him. Thus, Jesus in response to their question also asked them a question about who Christ is.

Pharisees

> While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied. He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says, " 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet."' If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions. (**22:41-46**).

The fourth incident embodies the gathering together of the Pharisees. Jesus took

advantage of this occasion and asked them to answer the question: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" (**22:42**), but they refused to answer (**22:41-45**). The religious leaders abandon their attempt to show that He posed a theological threat to their traditions through His exposition to the law. As one reflects upon the question Jesus asked the Pharisees, surely the readers of this Gospel must have recalled this same question to the apostles (**16:13-20**). During His conflict (**21:18—23:39**), Jesus goes to the very heart of their problems: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (**22:29**).

SEVEN WOES AGAINST THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL

Following this final conflict with the religious leaders, Jesus summarizes their many faults and addresses them as "hypocrites" and "blind guides" (**Matthew 23**). In His brief explanation of the leaders, He warns His disciples to obey them, not to copy them: "So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach" (**23:3**).

Matthew 23 details one of the most graphic descriptions available in all of Scripture about the decadence of Israel's leaders. Jesus issues seven woes against the religious leaders (**23:13-33**). Before enunciating the seven woes, He, like a bolt of lightning, goes to the very core of their corrupt nature: "Everything they do is done for men to see" (**23:5**).[11] The seven woes announced by Jesus are devastating to these leaders. This detailed analysis is given in order that one may ascertain beyond the shadow of a doubt, as to whom Jesus had in mind when He spoke of false prophets in **Matthew 7:15**). The following is His stinging condemnation of the false prophets issued in seven woes:

1. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to (**23:13-14**).
2. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are" (**23:15**).
3. "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it (**23:16-22**).
4. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind

guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel (**23:23-24**).

5. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean (**23:25-26**).
6. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness (**23:27-28**).
7. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous" (**23:29**; full text is **23:29-39**).

In this conversation against the religious leaders, Jesus castigates them as "blind" five times (**22:16, 17, 19, 24, 26**) and as "hypocrites" six times (**23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29**). They did not understand the important things in God's revelation. These leaders did not go for inner purity but were content with externals (**23:23, 27-28**). They were faultless in their observance of their rituals, but they were short on "justice, mercy and faithfulness" (**23:23**). This inner decay was so rampant among the religious leaders that Jesus issued His scathing attack against their unethical behavior. Jesus confronted these leaders head-on in their full-fledged, legalistic, ritualistic, and hair-splitting teachings (**23:15**). Consider the following judgments voiced by Jesus in His reaction to the religious leaders' hypocrisy:

- Brood of vipers! (**23:33**)
- Lawless (**23:23, 28**)
- Covetous (**23:25**)
- Self-indulgent (**23:25**)
- Hypocrites (**23:28**)
- Abusive (**23:34**)
- Murderous (**23:34-35**)

Jesus' castigation of the above leaders' unethical behavior is not the whole story. In fact, they enter into a conspiracy with other leaders in order to bring about the death of Jesus. For instance, Matthew concludes his Gospel with a reference to this conspiracy on the part of the leaders to eliminate Jesus.

> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. "But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people" (**26:3-4**) (emphasis mine).

Matthew portrays the stealth employed by the so-called religious leaders to bring about the crucifixion of Jesus. They themselves do not openly arrest Jesus, but rather they employed Judas for this clandestine operation (**26:14-16**). Next, observe how they hid behind the crowd that they sent to arrest Him (**26:47**). Then, even in the trial they employed false testimony and false witnesses to gain conviction (**26:59-60**). Again, they also accused Jesus of blasphemy in order to give credence to their condemnation of Him (**26:65-68**). Once again, while Jesus was on the cross, they mocked Him (**27:41-43**). And finally, they even went so far as to try to frustrate the resurrection by sealing and guarding the tomb (**27:62-66**).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, the religious leaders are presented in a very unfavorable light. They rejected God's point of view about His Son. They acted without authority from God. Jesus acknowledges that they have no God-given mandate to lead the children of Israel; in fact, they are children of Satan (**12:24-37**). Jesus accuses them of being of the Devil (**13:36-43; 15:12-13**). These leaders are so corrupt and evil and dishonest that they cannot recognize the power and presence of God's initiative in the history of salvation (**21:23**). Jesus held them responsible for the future destruction of Jerusalem (**22:7**). Following His seven woes, Jesus foretells the destruction of their city (**chapter 24**). As Matthew concludes his life of Christ, surely his readers must have reflected upon Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in which He forewarned His disciples: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (**7:15**).

My objective in writing this series on "false prophets" is not to attack those who apply **Matthew 7:15** to other Christians who often disagree with the "party cry," but rather to assist these individuals in handling correctly God's Word. The chief objective of this study is to help preserve the unity for which Jesus prayed in His priestly prayer (**John 17**). **Matthew 7:15** is frequently misapplied by many sincere Christians within the twenty-five or more divisions within the Stone/Campbell Movement. Hopefully, this analysis of **Matthew 7:15** will help individuals to focus more on the context when they want to understand the intent of the author. There is a need, I believe, to guard against interpretations that may not, in spite of all their sincerity, ring true to the biblical revelation itself. But often, subjective interpretations and dogmatic approaches by many Christians do much to deny the very Scriptures they claim to uphold.

Leaders (preachers, elders, and editors) should be very careful about superimposing upon a text their own speculative and subjective interpretation in order to avoid the very error that Jesus condemned among the religious leaders. May God help every Christian not to apply this Scripture (**Matthew 7:15**) to believers who hold to the use of Sunday school, individual communion cups, wine, grape juice, manner of breaking the bread in the Lord's Supper, the treasury, Bible colleges, instrumental music, hand-clapping, solo singing in the assembly, choirs, and so on.

Are you hearing this text afresh? Do not allow your traditions to stand in the way of listening once again to this biblical passage. Many Christians are so used to reading this Scripture as they have been taught by generations of godly men and women that for one to question the traditional interpretation is to question Scripture itself. God's people

must learn to have another look at and reinterpret interpretations that have been handed down for centuries. Since Christians are a product of their own religious culture, it is difficult, if not almost impossible, for believers to read the Bible without spectacles. Unconsciously, the interpretation of the church fathers has become the watchword of orthodoxy in the interpretation of this frequently altered Scripture.

It is not uncommon for the biblical message to be limited by some predetermined interpretive grid. One of the greatest ways to be sure that one's interpretation of a passage remains faithful to his or her tradition is to ignore the context. One's approach to **Matthew 7:15** through a predetermined "interpretive filter"—an interpretation handed down through generations of interpreters—should be avoided with extreme care. If one approaches this Scripture, or any Scripture for that matter, with strong subjective biases, he or she will view God's Word through colored glasses. In concluding this study on false prophets in **Matthew 7:15**, one must again ask himself or herself the question: "How did Christ employ this stinging phrase?" One should guard himself or herself against manipulating biblical material to support one's prior ecclesiastical interest. Christians must struggle to liberate the New Testament from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of ecclesiastical assumptions. One must always be on lookout to prevent his or her religious reasoning and enthusiasm from being substituted for ungrounded interpretations of one's brain. One must ever guard against the fallacy of reading his or her own experience into the world of the text.

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[1] Part three discusses the first occurrence of this phrase (*false prophets*) in the New Testament. As stated earlier, many sincere and God fearing believers frequently misapply this expression against other believers, especially when certain ones deviate from the status quo of certain factions within the body of Christ.

[2] The first article in this series emphasized that false prophets are not necessarily individuals who fail to properly interpret the Scriptures. In part two, this author analyzed **Romans, chapters 14 and 15**, and **First Corinthians, chapter 8**, to determine if diversity in opinion, in and of itself, warrants the epithet of "false prophets." Just a perusal of these Scriptures demonstrates that Paul did not advocate unity based upon conformity, but rather, he appeals for unity in diversity as the way of peace among Christians.

[3] Duncan S. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1986), 6.

[4] **Matthew 24:11, 24** and **Mark 13:22** will be analyzed in Part 4 of this series.

[5] All Scripture citations are from the New International Version, unless noted otherwise.

[6] The prevailing interpretation of "You have heard that it was said" is generally credited with the teachings of the Old Testament, but this does not appear to be correct in

light of the context. In this Sermon, Jesus is drawing attention to the original intent of the law versus the teachings of the religious leaders. For one to follow these teachers of the law is tantamount to following a "false prophet."

[7] Matthew also employs a number of literary techniques to call attention to the importance of certain subjects. For example, Matthew introduces us to baptism in John's ministry: (1) baptism of the people [**3:1-12**] and (2) the baptism of Jesus [**3:13-17**], and, then, Matthew concludes his Gospel with Jesus' command to baptize (**28:16-20**). Another characteristic that is quite interesting is Matthew's report of the life of Christ; for example, He starts his book, following the genealogy of Christ, with the teachings of John and the teachings of Jesus (Sermon on the Mount—**5:1--7**:**28**), and, then, concludes his book with Jesus emphasis on "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (**28:20**). Following the baptism of Jesus, Matthew also informs us that Jesus "went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues" (**4:23**) and, then, immediately, gives the substance of that teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

[8] Matthew makes reference to the Pharisees twenty-eight times in his Gospel: **3:7; 5:20; 9:11, 14, 34; 12:2, 14, 24, 38; 15:1, 12; 16:1, 6, 11, 12; 19:3; 21:45; 22:15, 34, 41; 23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; 27:62**. In the Gospels, there are seventy-nine occurrences of the "Pharisees" in seventy-seven verses. Matthew makes reference to the "teachers of the law nineteen times: **2:4; 5:20; 7:29; 9:3; 12:38; 15:1; 16:21; 17:10; 20:18; 21:15; 23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; 26:57; 27:41**. In the Gospels, there are fifty-five occurrences of the "teachers of the law" in fifty-five Bible verses. In order for one to understand Jesus' caution in **Matthew 7:15**, it would be helpful for one to read the context of the above-mentioned Bible verses.

[9] See also **Matthew 15:1-14**.

[10] Jesus develops this destruction more fully in **Matthew 24**.

[11] In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned His disciples about external behavior performed for show. In that Sermon, Jesus discloses the same mind-set (**Matthew 6:1-8**) that He addresses in **Matthew 23**.

The Ritual of Fasting in the Old and New Testaments

Thrust Statement: **Fasting is always a mark of deep spiritual concern.**

Scripture Reading: **Matthew 6:6-18**

As one reflects upon the subject of fasting in the Old and New Testaments, one quickly discovers that fasting is a justifiable reaction to hazards, to hardships, to sadness, to mourning, or to confession of sin. Thus, many Christians resort to private fasting in the time of some physical or spiritual need in their own world of inadequacy. In order to shed light upon the practice of fasting in the Old and New Testaments, this essay will examine various texts to help determine the motives behind the numerous cases of fasting found in both Testaments.

FASTING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew verb, xWm ("to fast"), and the Hebrew noun, som ("a fast"), implies total abstinence from all food for a certain period. Also associated with these two words is another phrase, u!nn> n#p#v ("to afflict the soul"), which also conveys the idea of fasting. This latter phrase is found in **Leviticus 16:29**, an expression associated with the Day of Atonement. Fasting in the Old Testament expresses grief and penitence. For example, the people of Jabesh Gilead, upon hearing of Saul's mistreatment by the Philistines, took the bodies of Saul and his sons from Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned their bodies. Following their burial, the Scriptures inform its readers that the people fasted for seven days (**1 Samuel 31:11-13**). An example of penitence associated with fasting is found in **1 Samuel 7:6**: "When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, 'We have sinned against the LORD.' And Samuel was leader of Israel at Mizpah" (NIV).

Prior to the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah (839 BCE), rebukes the children of Israel for thinking that fasting would automatically gain a hearing from God (**Isaiah 58:3-4**). Immediately, the prophet calls attention to right conduct. If one does not have respectable

behavior, then fasting is in vain (**58:5-12**). Fasting, in and of itself, is desirable under certain circumstances, but, on the other hand, one's life must exhibit the ethical character that pleases God and helps humanity. God speaks through Isaiah: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and to break every yoke: Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood (**58:6-7**).

As stated above, fasting is acceptable, but good behavior must precede fasting in order for this act of devotion to be acceptable to God (see also **Amos 5:21-24**). Following the Babylonian captivity, Ezra, a priest and teacher of the Law of God, assembles the people willing to go back to Jerusalem by the canal that flows toward Ahava. Whereupon he says, "I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions" (**Ezra 8:21**). One can find a number of examples in the Old Testament in which fasting was directed toward God to secure His guidance and help (see **Exodus 34:28**; **Deuteronomy 9:9**; **2 Samuel 12:16-23**; **2 Chronicles 20:3-4**).

FASTING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The usual Greek words in the New Testament for fasting are the verb nhsteuw ("to fast, to go without food") and the noun nhsteia ("a fasting, a fast"). Fasting had become a common practice among the Jews and was continued among the Christians. The Jews fasted twice a week—Monday and Thursday—as a part of their religious devotion (see also **Luke 18:12**). Yet there were others like Anna who fasted often (**Luke 2:37**). The only occasion of Jesus fasting is in His temptation in the wilderness (**Matthew 4:1-4**). Jesus rebukes the practice of fasting when it is carried out simply as an outward manifestation of parade and not as inward act of devotion to God (**6:16-18**). The context of **Matthew 6:16-18** appears to assume that His disciples would find occasions that would call forth a time of abstinence from food in order to put themselves into a spiritual frame of mind to seek God's direction.

One such example of fasting is in the church at Antioch. Luke informs Theophilus (**Acts 1:1**) that while the church was engaged in "ministering" and "fasting" (**13:2**), the Holy Spirit says, '"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' [3] So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (**13:2-3**). This combination was common among the Jews, but the New Testament seldom combines these two acts of religious zeal. There are only four instances in the New Testament in which the two acts of devotion occur together. Two of the occurrences are found in connection with Anna (**Luke 2:37**) and Saul's conversion (**Acts 9:9-12**).

Fasting is not an essential ingredient for prayer, even though it is joined to prayer. Prayer is commanded in the New Testament, but fasting is not commanded. Just a perusal of the Book of Acts reveals the absence of fasting in many prayers. For instance, Luke records a prayer meeting following the release of Peter and John from prison (**4:23-31**). Yet, the absence of fasting is conspicuously not present. Another example is the selecting of seven deacons to carry on the "daily distribution of food" to Grecian Jews (**6:1**) in which the apostles says, "We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our

attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (**6:3-4**). Again, fasting is not included. There is no record of fasting in the appointment of Matthias as an apostle (**1:24-26**).

Fasting is noticeably missing from the New Testament Epistles. Even though the noun form is found in **2 Corinthians 6:5** and **11:27**, one detects that in neither context is the noun used in the sense of a religious fast. One can draw the conclusion that fasting was not extremely major during the apostolic period. Following the apostolic era, one discovers that fasting gained a foothold in the practices of the church. The church eventually mandated the practice of fasting two days a week—changing the days from Mondays and Thursdays to Wednesdays and Fridays. Martin Luther (1483—1547) did not object to fasting, but he did protest the binding of this act of religious observance as a necessary duty; he also raised objections to the fixing of certain days as compulsory for its performance. Excessive emphasis upon fasting is, perhaps, the reason the word *fasting* is added to the following Scriptures: **Matthew 17:21**; **Mark 9:29**; and **Acts 10:30**. Both liberal and conservative scholars agree that since Tischendorf (1815-1874) that the word *fasting* is textual additions to the original Greek text, which clearly indicates the church's growing interest in the practice of fasting after the apostolic period.

CONCLUSION

An in-depth study of fasting in the Old Testament reveals that individuals resorted to fasting in order to avert calamity or to elicit God's compassion. The prophets also reveal that fasting without true meekness and contrition is worthless in God's sight. In the New Testament, one learns that the absence of Jesus from His disciples would lead one to believe that in the times of misfortune and misery, one would fast (see **Matthew 9:14-15**). Thus, one can conclude that fasting is a legitimate response to hazards, to hardships, to sadness, to mourning, or to confession of sin. These emotions may be demonstrated by private fasting. Having said this, nevertheless, fasting does not appear to be required of Christians. It is a voluntary act on the part of every believer when he/she realizes his/her inadequacy.

Fathers: Discipline and Instruct Your Children

Thrust Statement: **God wants fathers and mothers to teach their children His Holy Word.**

Scripture Reading: **Deuteronomy 6: 4-9; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Ephesians 6:4**

Today is a day in which individuals remember their fathers. Since this day is called Father's Day, it seems appropriate to draw examples from the Scriptures of the things that should help every father in the rearing of his own children. Fathers, as well as mothers, have an awesome responsibility to their children to teach them about God and His interaction with His creation. Not only are fathers and mothers to instruct their children but they are also to discipline them in order to bring about a certain kind of behavior that will bring glory to God. God, in His infinite wisdom, has given children parents whose power and prestige are greater than all the influences of society. But today, this message focuses more on fathers than on mothers, even though what is said about the father is equally true of the mother. This one person that I wish to focus attention on in this message is none other than that of the father himself. The father can make a big difference in his child's life. This fact of the father's importance cannot be overstated. Children have a predisposition to want to be like their fathers.

Just as Christians are to be examples to other Christians, so fathers are to be examples to their own children in their daily walk with God. Do you attend church on a regular basis? Do you pray with your children? Do you read or tell your children about Bible characters? Do you read the Word of God to your children? Have you told your children about God's creation of the universe? Do you teach your children about the things of God? Have you told your children about the scheme of redemption? Have you told your children about Jesus' death upon the cross? Have you told your children that God demands a certain kind of behavior? Do your children know anything about the Ten

Commandments? What are you teaching your children about God?

If one does not relate to his or her children the things of God, the next generation will not remember the mighty deeds of God. It is imperative that parents teach their children about God and His mighty works. Is God concerned about parents teaching their children? Does God demand that parents teach their children? When God led the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, God, toward the end of the forty years of wilderness wanderings, instructed Moses to leave instructions to parents concerning the religious education of their children. He writes:

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.[a] 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (**Deuteronomy 6:4-9**). [1]

God wants His Word taught to the children. Why? Everyone knows that the human heart is prone to go astray. When parents "sit at home," "walk along the road," "lie down" at night, and "get up" in the morning, God wants the home to be a place of godly instructions. God wants parents to shape and mold the lives of their children to conform to the ways of holiness. Fathers and mothers should never forget that God is working in them to accomplish His objectives. Moses admonished the parents to discuss God's Word in the home and to allow the Word to guide one's conduct twenty-four hours a day. "Tie them," Moses writes, "as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." How does this command influence your own behavior in the instructions of your children's religious education in the home? Is there a Bible in your home? Are you teaching your children the Word of God?

One can hardly read this instruction from God without reflecting upon the words of Paul to Timothy:

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (**2 Timothy 3:14-17**).

"All Scripture" includes the Old Testament writings. Can your children say, "from infancy I have known the Holy Scriptures"? Where did Timothy learn the Scriptures "from infancy"? Listen, once more, to Paul as he calls attention to Timothy's background training:

> I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. 6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (**2 Timothy 1:5-7**).

Yes, every family still needs parents that will instill into the hearts of their children a love for God. Children need to be told about creation; children need to be told about Jesus, and children need to be told about the Holy Spirit. Children should be told the stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and how these three Hebrew boys refused to obey the king's order to bow down to a golden image. The story of Daniel and the lion's den is a story that speaks of courage and devotion to the God of heaven. Have you ever told your children about Joseph and his brothers in the land of Egypt? Have you ever told your children about Jesus' death upon the cross? What do your children know about the Bible? How much do you appreciate the Bible? Are you aware of the persecution of those who had a part in giving the Word of God to English speaking people in their own language? Would you be willing to die for the Scriptures? The following is the story of one man who was burned (1536 CE) for translating the Bible into the English language:

> Tyndale was a man of heroic stature and died a martyr's death. In England alone, more than 1,000 people were burned between 1400 and 1557 for the sake of the Gospel. Tyndale's books and tracts (or "pestilent glosses" as his enemies referred to them) were smuggled into England wrapped in bales of wool or cloth, or sacks of flour by fellow "Lollards". Had he remained a Catholic priest Tyndale would no doubt have been canonized as a saint, but had he remained a Catholic he would not have attempted to translate the Bible without official sanction. Although the Bible was available in the vernacular in much of Europe, the only version of the Scripture tolerated in England was St. Jerome's Latin translation which dated back to the 4th century. It was thus a closed book even to most clergymen. Tyndale was determined to make God's Word accessible to all men.[2]

This story about Tyndale is cited in order to bring to one's attention the sacrifices some have made in seeking to make the Bible available to all who wish to read. This man died in order to make the Word of God accessible to all men. Hopefully, this tragic story will reinforce the need to revere the Word of God and to read the Word of God on a daily basis to your children. Is reading the Holy Scriptures very important in the life of God's people? People in Tyndale's day paid as much as $103.00 for just one copy of the Bible. Individuals would pool their money in order to purchase a Bible. After purchase, individuals would gather as a group and someone would read the Holy Word.

Listen to Paul as he exhorts Timothy to engage in the public reading of the Word: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (**1 Timothy 4:13**). Again, Paul, in writing to the Christians at Colosse, closed his short epistle with emphasis upon the reading of his epistle to the church: "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (**Colossians 4:13**). When Paul wrote to the

Thessalonians, he also charged them to read this letter to the whole church: " I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers" (**1 Thessalonians 5:27**). The Book of Psalms begins with one of the characteristics that is true of the man or woman who is blessed: "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (**Psalm 1:2**). Is your delight in God's Word? Hopefully, you, too, can express your love for God's law as one of the psalmists did: "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (**Psalm 119:97**).

Fathers and mothers have a responsibility to teach their children so that they will put their trust in God. This author, Dallas Burdette, is a classic example of one's father reading the Word of God to his child in order to create within him a desire to trust and serve God. I believe that I am where I am today as a result of my godly father, Pete Burdette (1909-1982), reading to me the Holy Scriptures. I still remember very vividly my father reading to me the Bible stories that caught my imagination. My late grandfather, Elbert Dallis Miller (1885-1969), told me that I related to him that I wanted to preach when I was only six years old. Where did this come from? I believe it came from my father who created an intense desire within my mind to serve God. The Scriptures address the purpose for teaching one's children. The psalmist paints a picture of this in the following words:

> O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. [2] I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old— [3] what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. [4] We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. [5] He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, [6] so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. [7] Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands (**Psalm 78:1-7**).

This psalm sets forth the necessity of biblical tradition in the life of God's people. Even today, Children, as a whole, become Christians through the teachings of their parents. One can now understand more clearly why God admonished the parents to discuss God's Word in the home with their children. Parents have an obligation to guide the minds of their children. Parents must instill into their children an understanding of God in order that they might put their hope in Him. Parents must tell the next generation and the next generation must tell the next generation—"even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." Are you telling your children about how God became flesh in order to bring redemption to those who believe in Jesus? God's grace can cure bad behavior. When one reflects upon the story of salvation, this retelling of the story leads to praise. This remembering by the parents will invoke the heart to rely upon God, and it will also put on view one's commitment of his or her soul.

CONCLUSION

Parents who neglect their responsibilities in teaching their children biblical tradition do so at their own peril. Spiritual education of the children stood, as it were, foremost in the mind of God. Even with the feast of the Passover, God wanted the children to be taught about their past. God desires that parents instruct their children in

the fear of the Lord. Children should be taught to memorize the Ten Commandments, segments of the Sermon on the Mount, and many other Scriptures, such as, for example, **John 3:16**. One purpose in teaching children about the Scriptures is in order that they might not sin against God. The psalmist writes: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (**Psalm 119:11**).

Fathers teach by example, that is to say, by their language and by neglect of that which is of value. Also, a father who does not pray is teaching his children not to pray. A father who fails to neglect the public assembly of the saints is teaching his children to neglect it. The one who does not read his Bible is teaching his children not to read it. To allow a child to grow up without religious training would be the same as to allow your garden to be overrun with weeds, briars, and thorns. If the parent does not instruct his or her child, the child, too, will be overtaken with the ways of the world. If a father does not teach his children truth, then others will teach them error. How should a father bring up his children? Listen to Paul: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (**Ephesians 6:4**). Are you training and instructing your children in the Lord?

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[1]All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

[2] For a detailed study of William Tyndale, see "William Tyndale" [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.williamtyndale.com/0crimesofwilliamtyndale.htm (accessed 14 June 2002).

A Tribute to The Life and Memory of Richard ("Pat") Kilpatrick

SCRIPTURE READINGS

21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not
have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you
ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered,
"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to
her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even
though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you
believe this" (**John 11:21-26**)? [1]

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come
for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have
kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which
the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to
me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing (**2 Timothy 4:6-8**).

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me
through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in
me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that
you have sent me (**John 17:20-21**).

TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF "PAT" KILPATRICK

Today, we gather to pay our respect for a warrior of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Our hearts are deeply saddened at the death of this loved one. We are here because we believe in God, we believe in Christ, and we believe in the Holy Spirit. Pat Kilpatrick was a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He too believed in God, in Christ, and in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as God's guarantee that he would have eternal life when it came time for him to cross the great gulf between God and humanity. Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus prayed, shortly before His crucifixion, for Pat Kilpatrick. How do I know this?

Listen to this prayer in which Jesus prayed for Pat and for everyone else that is here today who believes in Jesus as God's Way of salvation:

> "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, [21] that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (**John 17:20-21**).

Pat was born on March 14, 1927 and passed into his eternal dwelling with God on February 3, 2004. Pat died just a few days before his seventy-seventh birthday. During his earthly sojourn, Pat can be reckoned as one of the great leaders within the Reformation Movement initiated by the Campbells and Stone. He was one of the great defenders of the unity for which Jesus prayed. Pat published a religious journal for thirty years (1973—2003). Brother Pat was never a "full-time" preacher, even though he preached for a number of congregations located in the following towns and states—Huntsville, Alabama; Ardmore, Tennessee; Madison, Alabama; New Hope, Alabama; and Greenfield, Alabama (where he was baptized). Pat had a tremendous religious heritage. His father, Robert F. Kilpatrick, preached for thirty-five years and established seventeen congregations, mostly in north Alabama. For the past twenty-three years, Pat was a member of the Grassy Chuch of Christ, a congregation that I worked with for seventeen years, located in Arab, Alabama.[2]

It was during this time (my ministry with the Grassy Church of Christ) that Pat persuaded me to write for his journal. As a result of Pat's insistence, I became a writer. I will always be thankful for his assistance in teaching me writing skills. I remember the first essay that I wrote for his paper. He called and informed me that it took him several hours to go through my first paper in order to find synonyms to express my thoughts more clearly. If it had not been for Pat, I would never have become a writer. As a result of his efforts, I now have a web ministry—a ministry in which I post all my papers.

Not only do I owe my writing skills to Pat, but also I owe him gratitude for his teaching me about imputed righteousness and about worship. We traveled together on many occasions to various lectureships. During these trips together, he would share with me the subject of worship, a subject that took me a while to grasp. He called to my attention that nowhere in the New Testament are Christians ever told to come together to worship—worship is one's way of life twenty-four hours a day. For Pat, Christians assemble with other Christians because they are worshipers of God. This is an important distinction. Most of the divisions, not all, within the Churches of Christ, center on a so-called worship service with its five rituals that must be performed in a prescribed manner. In 2003, Pat published his book, *Restructuring the Church* in order to help Christians work through their traditions. This Book is divided into eight parts. In this publication, he analyzes worship, pattern theology, justification by faith, the church, imputed righteousness, Christian ethics, and so on. I wrote the Introduction to this Book.

One of his greatest contributions toward unity among God's people is found in his publication of Ensign for thirty years. He received hundreds of letters from around the world about how his paper had helped them in their spiritual journey. This paper led many Christians out of spiritual bondage. Three years after beginning the publication of Ensign, he felt the wrath of the congregation with whom he was identified (in Huntsville,

Alabama). The disturbance came over his views about the justification of sinners before God—justified by faith or justified by law. Pat took the position that one can only be justified by faith alone, not by works. As a result of this action of condemnation by the local congregation, he told me that this was probably the lowest point in his spiritual life. In 1997, during the month of April, he wrote me a letter about this reprimand by this body of believers: "Looking back on it I am convinced that God was behind it all because I was somewhat curtailed in what I wrote in the magazine in reference to 'law and grace' for I knew the effect it would have on our legalistic brethren in the congregation." During this period of turmoil, he experienced spiritual depression. Pat told me that he received a letter from Carl Ketcherside encouraging him to continue to preach the Gospel and not to give up. In this letter, Ketcherside said to him that he should be proud to be kicked out of the congregation; this was much better than having his leg gnawed off in order to escape. Later Pat prayed for strength: "Lord, give me the courage to preach what I understand."

Pat is in heaven today because of "imputed righteousness," that is to say, a righteousness credited to him by God—a righteousness that can be received only through faith. Pat shared with me that he was not sure when he really came to understand "imputed righteousness." But his thinking became solidified through his study of Anders Nygren's *Commentary on Romans*. In 1975 (May, June, and July), he wrote a three part series on "imputed righteousness." This focus was just one of the many issues that he stressed in his paper; he also placed great emphasis upon "unity in diversity." He wanted God's people to be one. He understood that Christians can no more all think alike than they can all look alike. He believed that all truth is true, but, at the same time, he also realized that all truth is not essential to salvation, else no one could be saved.

Book of Romans

Following this eulogy, the military service will conduct a military funeral in honor and memory of Pat Kilpatrick. This activity was to take place at the cemetery, but the family decided to conduct the military part at the "funeral home" since today is a rainy and cold day. As a result of this decision, the funeral director requested that I speak about thirty minutes instead of my ten minutes that I had planned to do. Pat would have been pleased with this decision. One of Pat's favorite books in the Bible was the Book of Romans. I will briefly share with you some thoughts of Pat concerning this wonderful Book.

Pat enjoyed citing **Romans 1:16-17** in his teaching on the Book of Romans. These two verses set forth the very heart of this Epistle—justification by faith. Paul writes: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (**1:16**). The Good News is about God's Way of salvation in and through His Son Jesus. This Gospel is God's power for the salvation of both men and women. Thus Paul writes with equal power the following words as he seeks to draw attention to the Gospel of God: "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (**1:17**). It is "in the gospel" that God reveals His method of justification. In the Greek text, Paul writes: "in it" (εψν αυψτώ', en autw), that is to say, in the Gospel. It is in this Gospel that God reveals a righteousness that comes directly from Himself. Paul expresses this truth this way: "righteousness from God (δικαιοσυψνη θεου' dikaiosunh qou). In other words, Paul is saying that this

righteousness originates in God—God is its source or origin.

In **verse seventeen**, Paul zeros in on faith as the means of receiving this "righteousness from God." He says that this is "a righteousness that is by faith from first to last" (εψκ πιψστεϖ ειψ πιψστιν, ek pistews eis pistin). Paul is emphasizing that this "righteousness from God" *begins* with faith and *ends* with faith. In **chapters 1 and 2**, Paul paints a rather dismal picture of both Jew and Gentile—both under condemnation. In **3:23**, Paul writes: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The Law of God shuts everyone's mouth (**3:19**). Thus Paul says, "no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law" (**3:20**). But Paul does not stop with this rather dismal picture of the state of humanity. He goes on to say:

> But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. [22] This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (**3:21-22**).

Paul begins **3:21** with two of the greatest words in all of the English language—"But now." "But now" (ΝυνιΨ δεψ, Nuni de) reveals His way of salvation that involves a "righteousness from God," a righteousness that "comes through faith in Jesus Christ." In the new aeon (Messianic age), one is "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (**3:24**). The word *freely* in the Greek text is δωρεαΨν (dwrean), which is the same word employed in **John 15:25** in which Jesus says, "They hated me without reason." The phrase "without reason" is the Greek word dwrean, which is translated in the KJV as "without a cause." Paul, in **Chapter 4** of **Romans**, illustrates "without a cause" with the story of Abraham.

In the next four chapters, Paul illustrates that freedom from God's wrath (**chapter 5**), freedom from the dominion of sin (**chapter 6**), freedom from the curse of the Law (**chapter 7**), and freedom from condemnation (**chapter 8**) are found only "in" and "through" Jesus Christ. The very end of **chapter 5**, Paul writes: "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (διαψ ψΙησου' Χριστου', dia Ihsou Cristou) [**5:21**]; in **chapter 6**, he pens: "In Christ Jesus our Lord" (εψν Χριστώ' ψΙησου', en Cristw Ihsou) [**6:23**]; in **chapter 7**, he again focuses on Christ: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord" (διαψ ψΙησου' Χριστου', dia Ihsou Cristou) [**7:25**]; and, finally, in **chapter 8**, he writes: "in Christ Jesus" (εψν Χριστώ' ψΙησου', en Cristw Ihsou) [**8:39**]. Paul alternates between "through" and "in." In these four chapters (**5—8**), Paul amplifies, as it were, **Romans 1:16-17**). These thoughts on Romans set forth the emphasis of Pat in his explanation of the overall theme of the Book about "imputed righteousness," that is to say, righteousness credited to one through faith in Jesus. This is how Pat knew that he had, and now has, eternal life.

NOTE FROM LAURA BELL ABOUT HER FATHER

Laura Bell, one of Pat's daughters, requested that I read a note written by her concerning "the things that brought dad great joy:

1. His Lord

2. Preaching and teaching the Word

3. His children and especially his grandchildren
4. His church family at the Grassy Church
5. His best friend Dallas Burdette
6. Family reunions
7. Eating out with his brothers and sisters
8. Eating at Red Lobster
9. Eating
10. Playing his guitar and mandolin and making Laura sing with him
11. Listening to gospel music and old guitar country music
12. His flower and vegetable gardens
13. Working on his magazine The Ensign Fair
14. Long discussions of the Bible with whomever would stay up all night with him
15. Learning how to do things on the computer
16. Receiving e-mails both serious and funny
17. Ordering gadgets off the TV and catalogs
18. People from his past who would drop by to see him
19. Visits from his grandchildren
20. Having everyone over to swim in his pool
21. His shell collection
22. Watching Lonesome Dove over and over
23. Listening to Rush Limbaugh
24. His military career
25. All the people who wrote him and encouraged him

Laura closes this list with her farewell: "We will miss you dad, pappy, and granddad." As we conclude this service in honor of a fallen fighter for Jesus, one is

conscious that his influence will continue for decades through his life and writings. I want his daughters and his sons and his grandchildren to reflect upon his faith and to emulate his faith in their day-to-day walk with God. It is time for us to say farewell. Pat, I say to you as an old soldier of the Cross, "Thank you for your faith and faithfulness to the cause of Christ." Your children will miss you, your grandchildren will miss you, I will miss you, your readers will miss you, and the Grassy Church of Christ will miss you. So long until we meet again in the eternal abode of God.

PRAYER

> O Lord our God and Father, enable us to claim the ministry left behind by Pat Kilpatrick, your son and our friend and brother in Christ. Help each of us to envision our own lives as lives of dedication to your service, just as Pat consecrated his life to your service. Give us grace to live our days in such a way that our lives and our deaths may be precious in your sight. You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You "Blessed." We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ's name, Amen.

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[1] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

[2] For a brief biographical sketch of Pat's life, see Dallas Burdette, "Biographical Material on the Life of R. L. Kilpatrick [ON-LINE]. Available from http:\www.freedominchrist.net [accessed February 11, 2004), located under SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under ELDERS/LEADERS.

Tribute to The Life and Memory of David Burdette

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord our God and Father, enable us to claim the ministry left behind by David Burdette, your son and our friend and brother in Christ. Help each of us to envision our own lives as lives of dedication to your service, just as David consecrated his life to your service. Give us grace to live our days in such a way that our lives and our deaths may be precious in your sight. You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You "Blessed." We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ's name, Amen.

OPENING REMARKS

Today, we have gathered to reflect upon the loss of one of God's children—David Burdette. David entered this world of sin and sorrow on July 6, 1936 and received his welcome into his eternal abode with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit on November 7, 2006. David reached his threescore and ten years. Today we celebrate and honor the life and memory of David Burdette. Earlier this year, David suffered a stroke. As a result of this stroke, David could no longer walk or talk. He endured pain on a daily basis. Fortunately, God made death an escape valve to shake off a life of eternal agony and pain. God does not view death in the same way that humanity views death. Isaiah, who wrote about 739 BC, addressed the death of the righteous. God spoke the following words through Isaiah's pen: "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. [2] Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death" (**Isaiah 57:1-2**). God in His mercy designed death as a means of escape from a life that is completely hopeless, especially a life of excruciating pain.

One can hardly read these arresting words without reflection upon the words found in **Psalm 116:15**. These words, too, shock the sensibility, or emotional response, of

the reader: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." God does not view death in the same light as men and women look at death. One other example about the death of a good person is found in the Book of Kings. The author of First Kings tells the story of Jeroboam, whose son was extremely ill. Jeroboam sent his wife to Ahijah, God's prophet, to inquire if his son, Abijah, would live. The prophet told the wife, "No." What is striking about God's reason for allowing the boy to die staggers the imagination: "because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord, the God of Israel, has found anything good" (**I Kings 14:1-14**). God allowed the death of Jeroboam's son in order to spare him from the evil that God intended to bring upon Jeroboam's household for his wickedness. In spite of the loss of my brother, I am thankful to God for allowing him to die in order to spare him from untold suffering. My brother's death was precious to God, even though we mourn his passing.

A DEATH FELT BY ALL

What has happened is indeed sad, but, at the same time, there is rejoicing that David is no longer suffering from the excruciating pain that he endured for several months. Fortunately, God in His wisdom designed death as a means of escape. Death was his getaway from pain and his entrance into the very presence of God. We may never really understand the agony that he endured for so many months. Yet, the important thing is that we can learn from his affliction of how to continue to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, without wavering in our faith in the sovereignty of God. His death can also reveal to each of us what we need to know about ourselves, about God, and about life. David, like the rest of us, had a body of flesh and bone. Being flesh, he was not perfect in the flesh, which is true of us all. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Even though the flesh is often times extremely weak, nevertheless, God is still cognizant of our make-up. The Psalmist expresses it this way:

> Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. [39] He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return (**Psalm78:38-39**).

"He remembered that they were but flesh," reflects the tender mercies that God exhibits in spite of our frailties. One can hardly reflect upon **Psalm 78** without recalling the words of Jesus to Nicodemus:

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, [f] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. [18] Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (**John 3:16-18**).

THE REMOVAL OF THE STING OF DEATH

David Burdette understood that he was a sinner, and, at the same time, he knew that only redemption in and through Christ was his only hope of eternal life. As one

reflects upon David's suffering, one is conscious that the final enemy that everyone meets is Death. Yes, Death is inevitable, ruthless, and final. Death confronts everyone with the stark reality that one's earthly life is transient, or short-lived. It is in this regard that James, our Lord's brother, penned: "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (**James 4:14**). The author of the Book of Hebrews expresses it this way: "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**). Job singled out the brevity of life this way: "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. 2He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure" (**Job 14:1-2**). Yet, having said this, Job then asked the question that confronts all humanity: "If a man dies, will he live again" (**14:14**)? The answer is yes! Job answered: "I know that my Redeemer[c] lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.[d] 26And after my skin has been destroyed, yet[e] in[f] my flesh I will see God; 27I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me (**19:25-27**)!

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Faith in the immortality of the soul and in a life after death can be traced to the beginning of human history. Daniel (605 BC), too, wrote about life after death: "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (**Daniel 12:2**). John the Baptist also gave this testimony: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (**John 3:36**). Martha, a dear friend of Jesus, struggled with the harsh reality of death and responded to Jesus' statement about Lazarus' death—"Your brother will rise again" (**John 11:23**)—with the following comments: "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (**11:24**). Jesus then responded by cutting away all underbrush about life after death: "I am the resurrection and the life, He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this" (**11:25**)? David Burdette still lives! Why? He believed in Jesus for redemption.

Jesus and the Sadducees

There are some today who do not believe in the after life of the dead. Some religious leaders in Jesus' day also denied the resurrection of the dead. Jesus confronted the Sadducees who denied the resurrection of the dead with a statement from the Old Testament concerning life after death: "But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'[a]? He is not the God of the dead but of the living" (**Matthew 22:31-32**). Abraham died almost 2000 years prior to the Incarnation, but, according to Jesus, he is still alive. Moses had been dead almost 1500 years prior to the coming of Jesus in the flesh, but, he, too, was still alive. Do you wish to conquer death? Remember, the finality of death is conquered in and through Jesus. David Burdette, my fleshly brother as well as my spiritual brother in Christ, is now clothed with an imperishable body; yes, he exchanged his mortal body with immortality.

As a result of this change of clothes, one can now say: "Death has been swallowed up in victory," and this victory over the "sting of death" is "through our Lord

Jesus Christ" (**1 Corinthians 15:54, 57**). Nothing but redemption in Christ meets the "sting of death." It is through Christ upon the Cross that one finds the amazing wonder of God's forgiveness and eternal life. God's act of deliverance comes from beyond history, and, at the same time, it is given in terms of history—God becomes flesh. God's redeeming action is witnessed in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. This action on the part of God is David's victory over the sting of death.

ETERNITY IN THE HEARTS OF MEN AND WOMEN

We who are here today to pay our respect to David are aware that life on this planet points beyond itself. Since God has set eternity in the hearts of men and women, individuals are conscious of life beyond the grave. Solomon, the son of David, writes about eternity dwelling within the hearts of men and women. He writes: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**). God's claim upon men and women is written into the very constitution of their being. Even though one may refuse God's call, nevertheless, one cannot escape it. One can no more escape this inner consciousness than one can escape his or her humanity. Both men and women acknowledge not only that there is something, but at the same time, both recognize that something ought to be. Individuals cannot help looking for an eternal meaning and an eternal reason or ground of one's being. Only mankind has spirit, which distinguishes humanity from the animal kingdom. It is human beings that create culture, not animals—animals do not inquire into the nature of truth. While, in some sense, men and women are physically akin to animals, yet they are still spiritually different—eternity set in their hearts. When men and women look on themselves as animals, they become animals. The uniqueness of men and women is related to their creation in God's image.

It goes almost without saying that if there is no belief in eternal life beyond the grave, there is no real meaning to this life. Men and women cannot escape the realization of something beyond the grave. Eternity is embedded in the hearts of men and women. Death is a constant reminder that everyone, eventually, fades as a leaf in spite of all the rich and varied adventures of life. David Burdette lived his "threescore and ten" years. Moses, in one of his psalms, goes right to the very heart of life's brevity: "The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span[a] is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away" (**Psalm 90:10**).

DAVID'S HOPE: NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

As I think about the life of David and his faith in Jesus, I cannot help but recall the words of Paul in the Roman letter: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (**Romans 8:1**). David was washed in the blood of the Lamb. Just as God said to the Israelites in Egypt, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (**Exodus 12:13**), so it will be for those who have put their faith in Christ. God, too, says to every individual who has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Yes, David was washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. It is my belief that when a person dies in Jesus Christ that death cannot rob one of eternal life. What kind of love is the love of God in Jesus Christ? For Paul, an ambassador of Christ, God's love is full of assurance. Paul expresses God's love this way:

> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:38-39**).

This is an exciting truth. David rejoiced in this truth. Nothing can separate us from God's love. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, God's love is still there. This message is written for those who wish to hear a message from God's Word that our hearts need, especially in the death of a loved one. God never turns His back upon His children. His love is an everlasting love. I do not believe that God will let David down—or let him go. One day Christ will reunite His people and there will be a great reunion. All of us will one day be reunited with him in the ceaseless ages of eternity. Paul, too, speaks of the great reunion to the Christians at Thessalonica:

> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. [14] We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. [15] According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. [18] Therefore encourage each other with these words (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

DAVID'S LIFE IN CHRIST NOT IN VAIN

David Burdette cannot return to us now, but one day we shall go to him. For the present, he is enjoying God's love and grace, just as we are experiencing God's love. It is this love that links our hearts together until we meet again. In our hearts, we still hurt. We still feel the loss, even though we know that David is better off in heaven. Heaven should not be just a destination that we aspire to go to someday, but rather heaven should be a motivation. In other words, God's people should build their whole lives on the vision of greater glory. David did this! David's life in Christ was not in vain, even though his life was very brief on earth—seventy years. David relied upon the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (**1 Corinthians 15:58**).

MINISTRY OF COMFORT

Just as Jesus did more than send a message of comfort to Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother Lazarus, so Jesus traveled to Bethany and stood by the grave and wept. Today, just as then, the bereaved still need the ministry of comfort. The church family at the New Covenant Fellowship seeks to give the ministry of comfort to David's family and friends. We are to comfort one another. The words: "mourn with those who

mourn" (**Romans 12:15**) is a vital ministry among God's people. These words of comfort have focused on the beauty of David Burdette's life and how it had been exemplified in his life during his ministry as a disciple of Jesus. It is never wrong to weep when loved ones are taken from us. If David Burdette could speak to us from the grave, he, no doubt, would encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ and all his family to put their trust in the One who gives eternal life.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the following question confronts everyone here today: Is there any eternal word of deliverance for the sufferers, for sinners, and for those enduring the agony of bereavement? Yes! Jesus is God's answer. Today we are again reminded that ultimately life is swallowed up in death. Is there any redeeming hope from the Word of God that enables us to rejoice with joy unspeakable in spite of death? Yes, in Jesus, one sees the glory of God in that death is swallowed up in victory. In Jesus, the sting of death is taken away. If one is not in Jesus, the sting of death is still there. In Jesus, God brings in the new age—the power of the eternal world. This is the wonder of Christianity. In Christ, God brings together eternity and time, He brings together heaven and earth, He brings together the infinite and the finite, and He brings together Himself and humanity. The hope of eternal life comes from outside ourselves, namely Jesus.

Remember, humanity is differentiated from the animal kingdom. One thing that separates the animal world from the world of humanity is death. If one wishes to raise the beast to the level of humanity, it would be necessary to give to the animal world the idea of death, which they do not possess. Why are we here today to grieve over the passing of David, and, at the same time, to celebrate David's homecoming? It is because we believe in God, in Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We believe that there is life after death. As we finish our remarks to the life and memory of David Burdette, we are reminded that death teaches us of the reality of sin and the necessity of being born again. Our time upon earth is very short. Death is the great leveler—all equally turn to dust. The reality of death should remind each of us of the sovereignty of God. Moses writes: "You turn men back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, O sons of men'" (**Psalms 90:3**). Death, again and again, should be a constant reminder of the frailties of humanity. Again, Moses captures man's frailties:

> For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. [5] You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning— [6] though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered (**90:4-6**).

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, we need a source of strength and refuge. We need a resting place. We offer our thanks to you for being this kind of help in the time of trouble. Bless the memory of David Burdette. We pray that David's death will not be in vain. Father, help each of us to think upon the changes that occurred in his life because of his faith in Jesus as the savior of the world. We know that life is a mystery; we know that for now we all see through a glass darkly. Help us as we seek and search for answers to so many problems in life. Grant us the peace and comfort that comes from trusting in you. We pray this prayer in

the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen!

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f Or *his only begotten Son*

)c Or *defender*

d Or *upon my grave*

e Or *And after I awake, / though this body has been destroyed, / then*

f Or / *apart from*

a Exodus 3:6

a Or *yet the best of them*

Tribute to The Life and Memory of David Starkey

PSALM 86:5, 15.

You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. . . . But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

PRAYER

O Lord our God and Father, You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You "Blessed." We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ's name, Amen.

TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF DAVID STARKEY

We have met today to honor the life and memory of David Starkey. I first met David about two years ago through Will Oldfield. I remember his first Sunday morning visit to the Oakwood Hills Church. His first visit was on a Wednesday night, and then he returned on Sunday morning. Prior to David's attending the gatherings of the saints at Oakwood Hills, he led a rather wasteful life. After his second week in attendance, he told me that he did not want to be the way he was, but he wanted to be like the people at Oakwood Hills. From that day on, David, as far as I remember, did not miss a Sunday morning service more than once in two years. David was baptized into Christ on the fourteen day of April 1999. David, at the time of his death, was still a babe in Christ—twenty months old.

As a result of David's activities in this congregation, there are several people that now attend Oakwood Hills, either directly or indirectly. David's mother, who is a faithful

Christian, attends this congregation. And, as a result of David, his mother, Reita Starkey, and his niece, Jennifer Starkey, were both baptized into Christ on the seventh day of May 2000. Also, Gene and Mary Spradlin are members of this congregation as a result of David's invitation. David brought his mother to the Oakwood Hills family, but his mother invited the daughter of Roy and Doris Gallion to the congregation. And, as a result of that invitation, Doris came with her daughter. Today, Doris and her husband, Roy, along with their grandchildren, Timothy and Sylvia, are members of this congregation. This family is another great blessing to the Oakwood Hills family. I have mentioned this family to illustrate the blessings that have come out of the conversion of David Starkey.

A TRAGEDY FELT BY ALL

What has happen is a tragedy, and all of us feel it deeply. It should never have happened; we wish that it had not happened. But we cannot change the past. In fact, we may never really understand the past. The important thing is that we learn from this tragic event what we need to know about ourselves, about God, and about life. David, like the rest of us, is flesh. The flesh often times is extremely weak. But God is cognizant of our make-up. The Psalmist expresses it this way:

> 38 Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. 39 He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return (**Psalm78:38-39**).[1]

"He remembered that they were but flesh," reflects the tender mercies that God exhibits in spite of our frailties. Suicide is a very complex act, and we had better leave the analysis to God. The Bible does not talk much about suicide. In fact, it only records the suicide of six men: Samson (**Judges 16:30**), Saul and his armor-bearer (**1 Samuel 31:4-5**), Ahithophel (**2 Samuel 17:23**), Zimri (**1 Kings 16:18**), and Judas (**Matthew 27:5**). Of these six men, nothing is said about their destiny, except Judas. Judas went to perdition, not because he committed suicide, but because he did not trust Jesus Christ (**John 6:66-71**).

As everyone today reflects upon the life of David and his tragic end, I wish to call attention to King David as an example of how people should react. In his "Song of the Bow" (**2 Samuel 1:17-27**), he had only good things to say about Saul, a man who was guilty of many crimes, including suicide. Today, I want to look at the good aspects of David's life, the things worth remembering. The fact that David ended his life in a tragic manner need not detract from the lasting contributions made during his life in Christ.

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

As I think about the life of David and his faith in Jesus, I cannot help but recall the words of Paul in the Roman letter: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (**Romans 8:1**). David was washed in the blood of the Lamb. Just as God said to the Israelites in Egypt, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (**Exodus 12:13**), so it will be for those who have put their faith in Christ. God, too,

says to every individual that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." David was washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. It is my belief that the way a person dies cannot rob him/her of eternal life. What kind of love is the love of God in Jesus Christ? For Paul, an ambassador of Christ, God's love is full of assurance. Paul expresses God's love this way:

> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:38-39**).

This is an exciting truth. Nothing can separate us from God's love. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, God's love is still there. This tragic event in the life of David cannot separate him from God's love. We are here today to hear a message from God's Word that our hearts need. God never turns His back upon His children. His love is an everlasting love. I do not believe that God will let David down—or let him go. One day Christ will reunite His people and there will be a great reunion. Paul, too, speaks of the great reunion to the Christians at Thessalonica:

> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. [14] We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. [15] According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. [18] Therefore encourage each other with these words (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

DAVID'S LIFE IN CHRIST NOT IN VAIN

David Starkey cannot return to us now, but one day we shall go to him. For the present, he is enjoying God's love and grace, just as we are experiencing God's love. It is this love that links our hearts together until we meet again. In our hearts, we still hurt. We still feel the loss, even though we know the person is better off in heaven. Heaven should not be just a destination that we aspire to go to someday, but rather heaven should be a motivation. In other words, God's people should build their whole lives on the vision of greater glory. David did this! David's life in Christ was not in vain, even though his life was very brief on earth—thirty-nine years (See **1 Corinthians 15:58**).

PURPOSE OF THE FUNERAL SERVICE

One purpose of this funeral service is to declare the value of life. If life is not precious, then why should one weep over the one who has died? Life is precious, death is painful, but in Christ Jesus one can have true comfort. The words of Paul to the

Philippians ring loud and clear to every believer: "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (**Philippians 1:23**). This statement is for the deceased, not for the survivors. In fact, Paul further states: "It is more necessary for you that I remain in the body" (**1:24**). Even though David is better off does not mean that the survivors feel better now that David is dead. Yes, we, in our minds, affirm the truth of God's Word, but, nevertheless, in our hearts, we still hurt very deeply. Death leaves an empty place in the home and in the heart. Death is like an amputation that never heals. Having said this, for the Christian, the finality of death only brightens the reality of heaven and makes the "blessed hope" that much more wonderful.

MINISTRY OF COMFORT

Just as Jesus did more than send a message of comfort to Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother Lazarus, so Jesus traveled to Bethany and stood by the grave and wept. Today, just as then, the bereaved need the ministry of comfort. The church family at Oakwood Hills seeks to give the ministry of comfort to David's family—to his wife, to his daughter, to his mother, to his brothers, and to his sister. We are to comfort one another. The words: "mourn with those who mourn" (**Romans 12:15**) is a vital ministry in this church. These words of comfort have focused in on the beauty of David Starkey's life and how it had been exemplified in his life during his short span as a disciple of Jesus. It is never wrong to weep when loved ones are taken from us. If David Starkey could speak to us from the grave, he, no doubt, would encourage his brothers and sister and all his family to put their trust in the One who gives eternal life.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude our remarks to the life and memory of David Starkey, we are reminded that death teaches us of the reality of sin and the necessity of being born again. Our time upon earth is very short. Death is the great leveler—all equally turn to dust. The reality of death should remind each of us of the sovereignty of God. Moses writes: "You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men" (**Psalms 90:3**). Death should also remind each one of the frailty of man. Again, Moses captures man's frailties:

> For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. 5 You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning— 6 though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered (**90:4-6**).

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, we need a source of strength and refuge. We need a resting place. We offer our thanks to you for being this kind of help in the time of trouble. Bless the memory of David Starkey. We pray that David's death will not be in vain. Father help each of us to think upon the changes that occurred in his life because of his faith in Jesus as the savior of the world. We know that life is a mystery; we know that for now we all see through a glass darkly. Help us as we seek and search for answers to so many problems in life. Grant us the peace and comfort that comes from trusting in you. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen!

In Memory Of
David Patrick Starkey

Date of Birth
November 1, 1961
Battle Creek, Michigan

Date of Death
December 12, 2000
DeFuniak Springs, Florida

Place and Time of Service
1:00 PM Friday December 15, 2000
Oakwood Hills Church

Presiding
Dr. Dallas Burdette
Eulogy by Will Oldfield

Interment
Friday December 15, 2000
Crowder Chapel Cemetery

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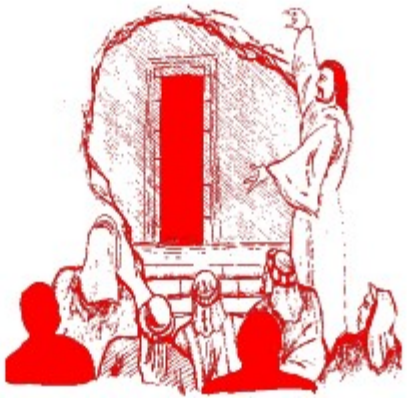
[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

Tribute to The Life and Memory of Marvin Wilson



JOHN 11:21-26

21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not
have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you
ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered,
"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to
her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even
though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you
believe this?" [1]

PRAYER

O Lord our God and Father, enable us to claim the ministry left behind by Marvin Wilson, your son and our friend and brother in Christ. Help each of us to envision our own lives as lives of dedication to your service, just as Marvin consecrated his life to your service. Give us grace to live our days in such a way that our lives and our deaths may be precious in your sight. You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You "Blessed." We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ's name, Amen.

TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF MARVIN WILSON

First Phase of His Life in Christ

It is appropriate that we reflect—Sunday, April 13, 2003—upon the loss of one of God's ministers. Family and friends met on April 11, 2003 to honor the life and memory of Marvin Wilson (December 19, 1926—April 09, 2003). I first met Marvin about forty-seven years ago through Katrina Burdette, who later became my wife. Marvin, so to

speak, was a latecomer to the assembly. I still remember, though vaguely, his first Sunday morning visit to the Vonora Avenue Church of Christ. His coming was the beginning of a long and lasting relationship between Marvin and God. Prior to Marvin's visit, Katrina, his daughter, started attending first and later his other daughters (Frieda and Darlene), his son (Marvin), and his first wife (Hazel), who later died of cancer (January 9, 1975). After Marvin's visit, I baptized his daughters, his son, his former wife, and finally Marvin himself. After Marvin's acceptance of Christ, I also baptized his mother (Julia Zelma Seamon)

Prior to his conversion to Christ, he was adamantly opposed to his family meeting with the church. But, as a result of an automobile accident—an accident that left him unable to work for about six months—he had a change of heart about Christianity. During his confinement, even though Marvin was not a believer, the Vonora Avenue Church of Christ paid his utilities and part of his house payments. Also, my first wife and I carried to the family a part of our groceries each week. This made an impression upon Marvin. As a result of this kindness, he told his family that they needed to check out this congregation. Marvin started studying to prove to me that Jesus was not the Messiah. After careful deliberation he came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of God and the long-promised Messiah. After his acceptance of Jesus as Lord in his life, he always remained faithful to God. He never forgot the deed from that day onward. I found a note in his Bible that reads: "The way we hear is the way we live; an argument is the weakest way to get anything over to another."

Second Phase of His Life in Christ

Several years later, he and Evelyn (his second wife—married on February 14, 1976) started a congregation in their home. To begin with, I was pastor, but later he became pastor of this church known as the Lakewood Drive Chapel. As a result of Marvin's activities in this congregation, today, there are still several faithful people who continue to serve the Lord, either directly or indirectly as a result of his labor. After his first wife's death (1975), he met Evelyn through his daughter Darlene Violette. Evelyn later became his wife; they lived together for twenty-seven years. Until his death, both shared in this ministry. He and his wife Evelyn conducted their Christian ministry out of their home for about twenty-five years. After an extended illness, Marvin and Evelyn had to dissolve the local congregation meeting in their home. But all of these believers now belong to other local congregations. Both Marvin and Evelyn taught Jesus as God's Way of salvation. This congregation was actively involved in saving unborn children from extermination through abortion. Marvin also began a group known as Pastors for Life. Only God knows the total good that came out of the congregation known as the Lakewood Drive Chapel.

Prior to his death, Marvin became a part of the New Covenant Fellowship (June 2002), along with his wife and all of his children. In addition to these loved ones becoming a part of this fellowship, there are several of his grandchildren and great grandchildren who are members of the New Covenant Fellowship—a testimony to Marvin and Evelyn. Both of these individuals touched the lives of many people. Marvin fought the good fight of faith. One of his greatest desires was to see all of his children in a relationship with God. A few months before his death, he witnessed all of his children attending the New Covenant Fellowship.

A DEATH FELT BY ALL

What has happened is indeed sad, but, at the same time, there is rejoicing that Marvin is no longer suffering from the excruciating pain that he endured for several years. Fortunately, God in His wisdom designed death as a means of escape. Death was his getaway from pain and his entrance into the very presence of God. We may never really understand the agony that he endured for so long. Yet, the important thing is that we can learn from his affliction of how to continue to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, without wavering in our faith in the sovereignty of God. His death can also reveal to each of us what we need to know about ourselves, about God, and about life. Marvin, like the rest of us, had a body of flesh and bone. Being flesh, he was not perfect in the flesh, which is true of us all. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Even though the flesh is often times extremely weak, nevertheless, God is still cognizant of our make-up. The Psalmist expresses it this way:

> 38 Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them.
> Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. 39 He
> remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return
> (**Psalm78:38-39**).

"He remembered that they were but flesh," reflects the tender mercies that God exhibits in spite of our frailties. One can hardly reflect upon **Psalm 78** without recalling the words of Jesus to Nicodemus:

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, [f] that whoever
> believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send
> his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through
> him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not
> believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of
> God's one and only Son (**John 3:16-18**).

Marvin's Notes in His Bible

Marvin, in the margin of his Bible—above John 17:20—wrote: "Lord, I believe—Thank you for salvation through Jesus Christ—Help me Lord in my weakness—Praise your holy name." Marvin frequently focused his attention on the words of Paul to the Romans about God's grace. Marvin knew that if he based his salvation upon perfect law keeping that he would be condemned. So he turned to the grace of God made available to everyone who believes in His Son Jesus Christ. Marvin found comfort in the words of Paul to the Romans. Marvin reflected often upon the finished work of Christ. He read the words of Paul as Paul described with clarity and precision the righteousness of the believer:

> But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to
> which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes
> through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for
> all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by

his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25] God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— [26] he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:21-26**).

In addition to this section of Scripture, Marvin was also excited about Paul's words in the very beginning of this epistle. Marvin cited these verses from Romans with joy about God's wisdom in accomplishing redemption for humanity. What were these other Scriptures? These Scriptures were **Romans 1:16-17**. Listen to Paul as he soars, as it were, into the heights of heaven with excitement as he describes how the righteous live:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. [17] For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith (**1:16-17**).

In Marvin's study Bible, he wrote about The Roman Road to Salvation. In writing about this, he cited **Romans 3:10; 3:23; 6:23, 10:13; 5:1**. The following chart is a copy of the chart as listed in his Bible:

3:10	**There is none righteous, no, not one.**
3:23	**For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.**
6:23	**For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**
10:13	**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**
5:1	**Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection Upon the Life of Marvin

As everyone reflects upon the life of Marvin and his death, I wish to call attention to King David as an example of how people should react to the good and the bad in their lives. In David's "Song of the Bow" (**2 Samuel 1:17-27**), he had only good things to say about Saul, a man who was guilty of many crimes, including suicide. As we reflect upon Marvin's life, we should reflect upon the good works in Marvin's life that brought glory to God. Marvin accomplished a lot of good for the cause of Christ during his earthly sojourn of seventy-six years. As one reflects upon his life, one can hardly fail to recall the words of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount:

[14] "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. [16] In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

MARVIN'S HOPE: NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

As I think about the life of Marvin and his faith in Jesus, I cannot help but recall the words of Paul in the Roman letter: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (**Romans 8:1**). Marvin was washed in the blood of the Lamb. Just as God said to the Israelites in Egypt, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (**Exodus 12:13**), so it will be for those who have put their faith in Christ. God, too, says to every individual that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Yes, Marvin was washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. It is my belief that when a person dies in Jesus Christ that death cannot rob him/her of eternal life. What kind of love is the love of God in Jesus Christ? For Paul, an ambassador of Christ, God's love is full of assurance. Paul expresses God's love this way:

> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:38-39**).

This is an exciting truth. Marvin rejoiced in this truth. Nothing can separate us from God's love. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, God's love is still there. This message is written for those who wish to hear a message from God's Word that our hearts need, especially in the death of a loved one. God never turns His back upon His children. His love is an everlasting love. I do not believe that God will let Marvin down—or let him go. One day Christ will reunite His people and there will be a great reunion. Evelyn (his wife and co-laborer in the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation through Christ), Bubba (also called Marvin), Frieda, Darlene, and Katrina will one day be reunited with him in the ceaseless ages of eternity. Paul, too, speaks of the great reunion to the Christians at Thessalonica:

> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. [14] We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. [15] According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. [18] Therefore encourage each other with these words (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

MARVIN'S LIFE IN CHRIST NOT IN VAIN

Marvin Wilson cannot return to us now, but one day we shall go to him. For the present, he is enjoying God's love and grace, just as we are experiencing God's love. It is this love that links our hearts together until we meet again. In our hearts, we still hurt. We

still feel the loss, even though we know that Marvin is better off in heaven. Heaven should not be just a destination that we aspire to go to someday, but rather heaven should be a motivation. In other words, God's people should build their whole lives on the vision of greater glory. Marvin did this! Marvin's life in Christ was not in vain, even though his life was very brief on earth—seventy-six years. Marvin relied upon the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (**1 Corinthians 15:58**).

MARVIN'S PRAYER ANSWERED

As stated above, on April 11, 2003, Marvin's family and friends met to declare the value of his life and ministry upon earth. If life is not precious, then why should one weep over the one who has died? Life is precious, death is painful, but in Christ Jesus one can have true comfort. The words of Paul to the Philippians ring loud and clear to every believer: "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (**Philippians 1:23**). On more than one occasion, Marvin prayed that God would take him home to spare him all the suffering that had fallen upon his frail body. Paul's statement is in harmony with the words of Paul in **Philippians 1:23**. This statement by Paul is for the living, not for the deceased. In fact, Paul further states: "It is more necessary for you that I remain in the body" (**1:24**). Even though Marvin is better off does not mean that the survivors feel better now that Marvin is dead, unless it is the comfort of knowing that Marvin is no longer suffering excruciating pain.

Yes, Marvin prayed that God would take him to heaven. Just as Marvin prayed, I , too, prayed that God would spare him pain through death. When Katrina and I received notice of her father's death, she prayed, "Thank you Jesus." His other children—all Christians—thanked God that their father was no longer suffering. Yes, we, in our minds, affirm the truth of God's Word, but, nevertheless, in our hearts, we still hurt very deeply. Death leaves an empty place in the home and in the heart. Death is like an amputation that never heals. Having said this, for the Christian, the finality of death only brightens the reality of heaven and makes the "blessed hope" that much more wonderful.

MINISTRY OF COMFORT

Just as Jesus did more than send a message of comfort to Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother Lazarus, so Jesus traveled to Bethany and stood by the grave and wept. Today, just as then, the bereaved still need the ministry of comfort. The church family at the New Covenant Fellowship seeks to give the ministry of comfort to Marvin's family—to his wife, to his daughters, to his son, to many of his relatives, and to so many of his loved ones. We are to comfort one another. The words: "mourn with those who mourn" (**Romans 12:15**) is a vital ministry among God's people. These words of comfort have focused on the beauty of Marvin Wilson's life and how it had been exemplified in his life during his ministry as a disciple of Jesus. It is never wrong to weep when loved ones are taken from us. If Marvin Wilson could speak to us from the grave, he, no doubt, would encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ and all his family to put their trust in the One who gives eternal life.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude our remarks to the life and memory of Marvin Wilson, we are reminded that death teaches us of the reality of sin and the necessity of being born again. Our time upon earth is very short. Death is the great leveler—all equally turn to dust. The reality of death should remind each of us of the sovereignty of God. Moses writes: "You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men" (**Psalms 90:3**). Death, again and again, should be a constant reminder of the frailties of humanity. Again, Moses captures man's frailties:

> For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. [5] You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning— [6] though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered (**90:4-6**).

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, we need a source of strength and refuge. We need a resting place. We offer our thanks to you for being this kind of help in the time of trouble. Bless the memory of Marvin Wilson. We pray that Marvin's death will not be in vain. Father help each of us to think upon the changes that occurred in his life because of his faith in Jesus as the savior of the world. We know that life is a mystery; we know that for now we all see through a glass darkly. Help us as we seek and search for answers to so many problems in life. Grant us the peace and comfort that comes from trusting in you. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen!

THE FOLLOWING WAS READ AT MARVIN'S FUNERAL

Found in His Bible

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. CHRIST is its grand subject, our good design for holy living, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It us a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

[1]All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

f Or *his only begotten Son*

Forgiveness Full and Free

Dallas Burdette **June 8, 1999**

Thrust Statement: **Forgiveness is in and through Jesus Christ our Savior.**

Scripture Reading: **Acts 10:34-43.**[1]

I am wondering if you are saying to yourself, "Well, I am not so bad. You know I do a lot of good works. Surely God would not condemn me. I try to treat everybody right." It is not uncommon for people to reflect upon the good works of individuals at death, and then surmise that surely they are in heaven because they were just "good people." Christ never really enters the picture. Sin never really enters the picture. There is no concept of the need of redemption from sin. No one discounts good works, but good works alone will not save anyone. Why, because we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. No one is without sin. Everyone must be washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. Without Jesus, one cannot be saved. To set the stage for this message about "Forgiveness Full and Free," it will be helpful to begin with an individual who was devout, one that feared God, and one that prayed to God always. This man was a good man, but he did not know Christ. But because of his devotion to God, God intervened in his life in order to bring him to a saving knowledge of Jesus, the Savior of the world. God is interested in your salvation and mine.

CORNELIUS THE CENTURION

Luke records how God through an angel approached Cornelius and told him to send for Peter, one of God's chosen apostles, to tell him about Jesus, God's Anointed One. Luke begins this story with these words:
At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa (**Acts 10:1-8**).

God used Cornelius, a gentile, to illustrate that His grace is available to all men, not just Jews. But before the men from Cornelius arrived, God appeared in a vision to Peter to teach him not to call "anything impure that God has made clean" (**Acts 10:15**). After Peter reached his destination at Cornelius's home, Peter went inside and found a large gathering. Peter then informed Cornelius that "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?" (**Acts 10:28-29**). Cornelius then told him about the vision he had encountered and proceeded to say, "So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us" (**Acts 10:33**).

PETER'S SERMON

Peter begins his remarks by saying, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (**Acts 10:34-36**). This message is as true today as it was almost two thousand years ago. This is the same message that I am proclaiming to all of you. The message of "peace through Jesus Christ" our Lord. In the course of this sermon, Peter says, "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (**Acts 10:43**). Even with all Cornelius' good works, still he did not have peace with God that involved the calm of sins forgiven. This peace and forgiveness of sins can be experienced only through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this same vein that Paul later wrote after his conversion concerning the forgiveness of sins: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (**Romans 5:1**).

The Promise of Forgiveness

Peters says, "All the prophets testify about him." He is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, which promises forgiveness through the coming of the Messiah. These Scriptures were divided into three parts: the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. Luke also reports the farewell words of Jesus to His apostles as He draws attention to the three divisions in the Old Testament: "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (**Luke 24:44**). A study of the Old Testament reveals that forgiveness was not an afterthought on the part of God, but rather, forgiveness was ever and always the promise of God for men and women.

Forgiveness Was Promised in the Book of the Law

As one peruses the Old Testament sacrificial system and the temple complex with

its furniture, one soon discovers that the animal victims and the temple system were but a foreshadowing of the one and only sacrifice that was to be offered in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer expresses it this way:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (**Hebrews 10:1-4**).

To briefly illustrate the promise of forgiveness in the book of the Law, I call attention to a few passages in the book of **Genesis**. Perhaps, one of the most frequently cited Scriptures in **Genesis** is **chapter 3**, **verse 15**. This verse records a conversation that God had with Satan: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (**Genesis 3:15**). In other words, God says that this "enmity" will spread to the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. God specifically speaks of "one" of Eve's seed—"he will crush your head." In other words, God announces this One as a male descendant. "He" will someday bruise the head of the Serpent (Satan), and Satan will bruise his heal. This took place in the crucifixion of Jesus.

In this ultimate atonement for sin in **Genesis 3:15**, God promises a male descendant of the woman who will "crush" and defeat Satan and his seed. This is the Gospel message. Jesus came to give His life a ransom for many and to destroy the works of Satan. Consider the following comments by Jesus: "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (**Matthew 10:28**). Again, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (**John 12:31**). Listen, once more, to the words of Jesus as He addresses the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His disciples and the condemnation of Satan: "and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (**John 16:11**). **Genesis 3:15** is about forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ.

Before leaving the book of Genesis, it is appropriate that I call attention to God's conversation with Abraham:

> I will make you into a great nation
> and I will bless you;
> I will make your name great,
> and you will be a blessing.
> I will bless those who bless you,
> and whoever curses you I will curse;
> and all peoples on earth
> will be blessed through you (**Genesis 12:2-3**).

God commands Abram to leave his own country and travel to the land that God would show him. In **Genesis 12:3**, God says that He blessed all people through Abram. Again, God repeats his blessings to Abraham as recorded in **Genesis 17**. God, on this occasion, informs Abram that through his seed nations and kings would come forth:

> When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

> Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you (**Genesis 17:1-6**).

But in **Genesis 22:18**, God is even more specific, when He informs Abraham that "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." The KJV translates this verse: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."[2] Paul, in writing to the Galatians, understood these passages in Genesis as having their fulfillment in Jesus. He writes:

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (**Galatians 3:6-8**).

Paul does not stop with this announcement about the proclamation of the gospel to Abraham, but Paul develops this still further by saying: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" (**Galatians 3:15-16**).

Forgiveness Through His Name

Forgiveness was promised in the Law, the Psalms, and the prophets. This message will not examine the Psalms or the prophets concerning the forgiveness of sins. This development of forgiveness in the Psalms and the prophets will be developed in another message in which I will explore all three divisions. But, for the time being, I want to call attention once more to the sermon of Peter in Cornelius' home. Peter goes right to the "heart and how" of forgiveness: "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (**Acts 10:43**).

You must believe in Him if you expect the forgiveness of your sins. "Through His name" comprehends the total life and ministry of our Lord Jesus. One cannot help but recall the angel's message as he announces the birth of Jesus: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (**Matthew 1:21**). Up until that time, God's people depended upon animal sacrifices. But, the writer of the Hebrew letters says, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (**Hebrews 10:4**). The blood of bulls and goats temporarily covered sins but could not take them away. Finally, however, the Messiah appeared to accomplish this feat. John the Baptist declared, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (**John 1:29**).

Forgiveness Through His Blood

The Hebrew writer also calls attention to this aspect of forgiveness through blood: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (**Hebrews 9:22**). God had to deal with man's evil. God had to present a perfect sacrifice for sin. Since God is holy and just, He had to deal with sin. It is in this regard that Habakkuk speaks, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong" **(Habakkuk 1:13**). Therefore sin had to be fully and finally judged in the person of His Son. This is why Paul writes: "God presented

him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (**Romans 3:25-26**). Jesus died as our substitute.

The Resurrection and Forgiveness of Sins

When the apostles appeared before the Sanhedrin (**Acts 5:27**), the apostles, in response to questions asked by the ruling body, addressed the benefits of the resurrection in these words: "God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel" (**Acts 5:31**). For the believer, the resurrection is the seal of God's acceptance of the sacrifice Jesus made for sin. Forgiveness of sins is not difficult to receive; it is simply a matter of faith in Jesus. Peter says, "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (**Acts 10:43**). The act of believing involves repentance and baptism on the part of the one who wishes to possess eternal life.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, in response to the crowds questioning him and the other apostles about what to do to be saved, responded by asserting, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 2:38**). If you wish to experience "forgiveness full and free," you must repent of your sins. Repentance is more that just regret over your past actions; repentance involves a total change of heart, mind, and will concerning sin. Repentance means that you are no longer a servant of sin, but rather a servant of righteousness. The Scriptures assert, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (**Proverbs 28:13**). John also proclaims the same thing: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (**1 John 1:9**). Forgiveness is available to anyone who believes in Jesus and repents of his/her sins. Once you have repented of your sins, then you need to respond to baptism that is in the name of Jesus— "repent and be baptized," announced Peter.

Personal Reliance on Christ for Forgiveness

There is only one Person in the universe who can set you free from sin, and that One is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. "Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins" (**Acts 10:43**), said Peter to Cornelius and his household. Paul expresses it this way: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (**Ephesians 1:7**). Here it is— forgiveness full and free. Do you want forgiveness in your life? You would do well to listen to Peter as he speaks about the forgiveness of sins to Cornelius: "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (**Acts 10:42-43**).

Paul, in Pisidian Antioch, calls attention to the "good news" about forgiveness (**Acts 13:32**). He also calls attention to the Holy Scriptures to give validity to his conclusions: "What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm (**Acts 13:32-33**). Again Paul declares, "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness

of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses" (**Acts 13:38-39**). In conclusion, I remind each of you that if you wish to possess "forgiveness full and free," the condition is: a total repentance of sin and a total reliance on Christ.

Oakwood Hills Church
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: June 19, 1999
Time: 7 p.m.
Occasion: Gospel Meeting
Present:

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

[2] *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982

God's Initiative in You

PART ONE

October 30, 1998

Thrust Statement: Man's salvation is God's creation.

Scripture Reading:

> Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much ore in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (**Philippians 2:12-13**).

This passage is a puzzle to many Christians. On the one hand, Paul says, "work out your own salvation"; but, on the other hand, he says, "it is God who works in you." Which is it? Is it both? Does man earn his salvation? Or is salvation God's initiative? These are questions that this study seeks to unravel. Just what is Paul saying to the Philippians? In the above Scripture reading, Paul brings us face to face with the practical questions of the Christian life. In other words, he is saying that one should work out his salvation to the finish—do not give up, do not faint, do not become discouraged. This passage is not a reference to one's attempt to earn one's salvation by works, but rather a reference to spiritual growth and development.

Salvation expresses itself in the ongoing process in which the believer is involved.

This passage (**Philippians 2:12-13**) brings us to the very heart of the most practical questions that confront each Christian in his or her walk with the Lord. But before one embarks upon a detailed study of the implications of this Scripture, it would be helpful to look at this exhortation as a whole before one analyzes its component parts. To begin with, one's attention should focus upon the word "therefore" ({Wste) at the beginning of this verse (**12**). This word compels us to take this statement ("work out your own salvation with fear and trembling") within its context; the word "therefore" links this verse with the preceding verses, that is to say, what has gone before.

Paul appealed to the Philippians to live a life of holiness, to live a life of love, to live a life of forbearance, and to live a life of faithfulness to God—come what may. Paul wanted their conduct to be in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Messiah:

> Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you (**Philippians 1:27-28a**).

Not only does the "therefore" take us back to **1:27**, but it also takes us back to where Paul exhorts the Philippians to "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (**Philippians 2:3**). Paul relies upon the incarnation and resurrection of Christ to drive home his point of humility. He forcefully illustrates this:

> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
> Who, being in very nature God,
> did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
> but made himself nothing,
> taking the very nature of a servant,
> being made in human likeness.
> And being found in appearance as a man,
> he humbled himself
> and became obedient to death—
> even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8).

This example of Christ's humility furnishes a lesson for Christian unity. This deep love is the bond that binds the people of God. It is this model of unselfishness that causes God's children to labor toward the advancement of the Lord's kingdom on earth. Remember, Jesus expresses this kind of love to His disciples: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (**John 13:34-35**). It is this self-sacrificing love that induces Christians to make allowances for other believers. It is this extreme love that exhibits patience, toleration, and forgiveness. As the Philippians work out their salvation, it is to be done without discord or pomp. This admonition is as true today as it was in Paul's letter. As we, at Oakwood Hills Church of Christ, work out our salvation, it is my prayer that none of us will battle with one another. Yes, Paul is encouraging these Christians toward love. He loves them and they love him. It is very possible that they are discouraged by the fact that

Paul is jailed in Rome. One wonders if the Philippians were saying within themselves, "without Paul we cannot live this Christian life."

It appears from the tone of the letter that Paul is saying, "Please don't imagine that my presence or my freedom is essential to your living the Christian life. Through the mercy of God, I proclaimed to you the gospel. God, in His infinite wisdom, allowed me to set you on your feet and, in a sense, establish your goings. You must not feel that everything is going down the tube; you must not feel that the work in Philippi is about to end because I am in prison and cannot come and proclaim the gospel to you." What about us at Oakwood Hills? Do the believers here also relate to the inner feelings of the Philippians? When Bob Lewis announced his departure, did any of you want to quit? Were you despondent? Can you identify with the Philippians? Are you experiencing turmoil within your soul?

Who is Bob Lewis, who is Dallas Burdette, who is Will Oldfield, who is Dennis Smith, who is James Hagan, who is James Hayes, who is James Ingle, and who is Tom Smith but servants of God. It is in this vein that Paul addresses the Corinthians:

> What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds (**1 Corinthians 3:5-10**).

Bob Lewis built upon the foundation laid by someone else; Dallas Burdette is building upon the groundwork laid by someone else. Bob and I have one purpose; namely, to build upon the company of God's saints; it is God who gives the increase. Paul forcefully reminds the Philippians that it is not his presence that is essential; rather, it is God's closeness that is indispensable. For Paul, the One who is really necessary is God; the One who is important to you is with you. He wants them to understand that it is God who works in them, not Paul. Listen again to the words of Paul, "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (**Philippians 2:13**). It is not Paul, but God that matters; it is not Bob Lewis, but God that matters; it is not Dallas Burdette, but God that matters. To the Philippians, he is saying in essence, "you must not feel that your labor in the Lord is for nothing." This admonition is also applicable to the saints at Oakwood Hills. The words of Paul to the Corinthian congregation are worth citing: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Everyone here is a minister of God. Everyone here is a servant of God. Everyone here is a minister of the proclamation of the good news of God. Everyone is to be actively engaged in kingdom work. Paul reminds the Corinthians as to what it is all about:

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to

> himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (**2 Corinthians 5:17-21**).

God has committed to all of us this ministry of reconciliation. In the course of history, there have been times when all leaders were killed or destroyed. But since Christianity is about the love of God within the soul, it has continued. Christianity is a personal possession of every true believer. My prayer is that God will continue to work in each of you. Do you remember how Paul began his letter to the Philippians? Listen as we read about his thanksgiving and prayer:

> I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God (**Philippians 1:3-11**).

Salvation is a personal possession. In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul was not exhorting the Christians in Philippi to produce their own salvation, or to arrive at salvation, but rather to work the salvation that they already possessed through faith in Jesus. The New Testament writers never present salvation as something that individuals achieve through their own efforts, their own strivings, and their own endeavor. No! "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (**Philippians 2:13**). The writers of the New Testament talk about justification, sanctification, and glorification.

In closing this message, let me briefly set forth, what I consider, the major distinctions in these three words. First, when one is justified, God regards that one as guiltless; He forgives them in Christ; they are justified by faith. Justification is God clothing us with the righteousness of Jesus Messiah. Second, sanctification is that process which is going on within us; it is that which makes us more like Christ. Sanctification is continuous, whereas justification is God once and for all regarding us as sinless. Sanctification is Christ being formed within us; in other words, our nature is being purged and purified and cleansed and perfected. Sanctification is something in which you and I are active. Yes, Christians are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (**Philippians 2:12**). Are you aware that God is working in you? Thank God for such a doctrine that assures us that in spite of all our sins and all of our unworthiness, God is still fashioning our lives. And, finally, glorification is the state beyond this life where the believer will stand with a perfect resurrection body face to face with God.

Oakwood Hills Church of Christ
DeFuniak Springs, FL
November 1, 1998
11 am

God's Initiative in You

PART TWO

November 14, 1998

Thrust Statement: **We are to work out this amazing salvation God has given us with awe.**

Scripture Reading: **Philippians 2:12-13**

Does Paul teach that one earns his or her own salvation? Is salvation by works? Or is salvation by grace? Just what is Paul exhorting the Philippians to do? Does "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (**Philippians 2:12**) contradict what Paul says to Titus?

> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (**Titus 2:4-7**).

Paul speaks of working out one's salvation in **Philippians 2:12**, but in **Titus 2**, he is speaking, not of working out your own salvation, but rather, of God's initiative in our salvation. Salvation is something they already possess through God's mercy. Even though one is saved by grace, nevertheless, Paul does not discount "good works" as necessary for the believer? No! Good works are things God ordained before the foundation of the world. Paul

goes right to the heart of the matter when he writes: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (**Ephesians 2:10**). Prior to this call to the Ephesians for "good works," Paul clearly advances salvation by God's grace. Again, he goes right to the root of redemption:

> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (**Ephesians 2:4-9**).

Let us return to Paul's letter to Titus. In this letter, Paul forcefully draws attention to good works following one's salvation by the grace of God:

> This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone (**Titus 3:8**).

Also, Paul, in writing to the Philippians, cannot make a practical appeal to good works without first putting it in terms of doctrine. In other words, he sets forth the scheme of redemption, and, then, he calls for conduct that will glorify God. Prior to his encouraging the Philippians to "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (**Philippians 2:12**), he says, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (**Philippians 1:27**). This reflection upon God's activity in our salvation is Paul's characteristic way of making an appeal for conduct and ethical behavior.

> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you (**Titus 1:11-15**).

It is not uncommon for Paul to lay down "grace" first, and then say, "If you believe this, then, cannot you see that this redemption inevitably necessitates a change in one's life style. He does not confront us with a way of life, and then say, "Go and live it." But rather, Paul tells us about the things that have been done for us, and then says, "Now then—go and live it." As you make this transition from doctrine, that is to say, the good news about salvation in Jesus, there is always a "therefore" (**Philippians 2:12**). There is a logical sequence from doctrine to behavior. Every believer must take up his cross and follow Jesus daily (**Matthew 16:24**).

What does it mean to "work out your salvation" (**Philippians 2:12**)? Before one can work out his or her own salvation, then, that person must see his or her own sinfulness and be

conscious of his or her need of divine help. The Philippians, too, realized that they were sinners saved by grace. They also were conscious that at one time they were under the wrath of God; they were aware that at one time they were under the dominion of sin; they were mindful that at one time they were under the curse of the law; and they were cognizant that at one time they were under condemnation. They knew that at one time they were guilty in the sight of God. They had heard and believed the good news of the gospel—that God had sent His only begotten Son to die in order to make atonement for them. Now it is time to produce fruit worthy of repentance.

"Working out your salvation" simply means that one is to perfect, to bring to pass, and to lead a life that results in "good works"—works that please God. One must now perfect the salvation given to him or her through faith in Jesus. Just as John the Baptizer exhorted the religious leaders to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (**Matthew 3:8**), so must every believer work out his or her own salvation with awe and reverence. One must submit himself or herself entirely to God. What kind of works or fruit is involved in the works that Paul speaks of in the Philippian letter. To begin with, let us reflect upon the words of Jesus in the healing of a man born blind:

> As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, **we must do the work of him who sent me**. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, **I am the light of the world**" (**John 9:1-5**).

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, sets forth the necessity of good works. In calling attention to fruit production in their lives, he also informed his disciples that they too were the lights of the world. It appears that *works* and *light* go together. Jesus proclaims ethical behavior for his followers:

> You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men**. You are the light of the world**. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they **may see your good deeds** and praise your Father in heaven (**Matthew 5:13-16**).

Again, as John records, Jesus speaks of working for the food that endures for eternal life:

> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval. Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (**John 6:27-29**).

To believe on the One whom God sent is to work out one's salvation with fear and trembling. What Paul told the Philippians to do concerning kingdom behavior is also set forth in his letter to the Romans:

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (**Romans 12:1-2**).

How does one present his body a living sacrifice? Is it through rituals or through ethical behavior? Is it through producing good fruit in one's way of life? Immediately upon calling upon the Roman Christians to present their bodies a living sacrifice, Paul catalogues a number of characteristics that exemplify Christ in their lives:

> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:
>
> > "If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
> > if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
> > In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
> > Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (**Romans 12:9-21**).

This is what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. We have been given a new start; we have been given a new nature. Salvation is set before us. We need to read the Word of God; we need to pray; we need to share salvation; we need to proclaim redemption. Just as David, the psalmist, expresses his gratitude for God's kindness, so must every believer allow gratefulness on his or her lips. David exclaims:

> I desire to do your will, O my God;
> your law is within my heart.
> I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly;
> I do not seal my lips,
> as you know, O LORD.
> I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;
> I speak of your faithfulness and salvation.
> I do not conceal your love and your truth
> from the great assembly (**Psalms 40:8-10**).

The believer loves the Word, lives the Word, and preaches the Word. Do you desire to do the will of God? Do you proclaim God's righteousness? Do you hide His righteousness in your heart? Do you conceal God's love and truth? Are you a silent Christian? Does your inner

man rejoice in God's law? Every Christian makes known the wonders of God's love through His Son Jesus. It is in this same vein of David's delight with the law that Paul, too, cries out: "in my inner being I delight in God's law" (**Romans 7:22**). Where is your delight? Where is your happiness? Where is your enjoyment? Is it in Christian ministry? Is it in the Word of God? Is your life in harmony with the law of God? Or is your life out of harmony with the law of God? Where are you? How do you stand? How do you measure up to God's standard? The first chapter in the book of Psalms sets forth the distinction between the godly and the ungodly. Which section of this Psalm do you fall into—godly or ungodly? This psalm is one that every Christian should memorize. Listen to the Holy Spirit:

> [1] Blessed is the man
> who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
> or stand in the way of sinners
> or sit in the seat of mockers.
> [2] But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
> and on his law he meditates day and night.
> [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
> which yields its fruit in season
> and whose leaf does not wither.
> Whatever he does prospers.
> [4] Not so the wicked!
> They are like chaff
> that the wind blows away.
> [5] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
> nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
> [6] For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
> but the way of the wicked will perish (**Psalms 1:1-6**).

Since God clothed us with His righteousness, are we devoting ourselves to God? Are we consecrating ourselves to prayer? Are we dedicating ourselves to ministry? Paul concludes his letter to the Colossians with these words: "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should" (**Colossians 4:2-4**). Again, I ask, are you praying for the advancement of God's kingdom? Are you also proclaiming the message of redemption? In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord taught His disciples to pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (**Matthew 6:9-10**).

Are we guilty of not working out this amazing salvation God has given us with fear and trembling? No, we do not work with "fear and trembling" in the sense of losing our salvation. But rather, this working is in the spirit of awe. In other words, the believer with humility and holy reverence works out his salvation; it is a holy vigilance and circumspection. The Christian constantly offers up a sacrifice of praise. Remember the words of the Hebew writer:

> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—
> the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share

with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (**Hebrews 13:15-16**).

With every believer, it is, "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (**Psalms 40:8**). Just as David could not seal his lips (**Psalms 40:10**) about God's righteousness, God's faithfulness, God's salvation, or God's love, so, too, every Christian shares the "good news" of God's righteousness made available through faith in His Son Jesus. Jesus is God's righteousness to us and for us. We cannot seal our lips about God's righteousness through faith in Jesus to all who believe. Paul sets forth this righteousness from God in rapturous language to the Romans:

> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:22-26).**

Jesus is God's faithfulness. It is in Jesus that one finds hope. It is in Jesus that one discovers security. We cannot seal our lips about God's faithfulness. Paul writes,

> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:38-39**).

In Romans, chapter 5, Paul speaks of freedom from the "wrath" of God through Jesus our Lord. He goes right to the heart of salvation. It is not in man, but it is in Jesus. We cannot seal our lips about freedom from God's wrath in Jesus. We cannot seal our lips about God's reconciliation in Jesus. Jesus is God's salvation for lost humanity:

> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (**Romans 5:9-11**).

Thus, like David, when we think of Him, we do not seal our lips; nor do we cease to do his will. In closing this message, I remind you of the words of the Hebrew writer:

> May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever (**Hebrews 13:20-21**).

Message Delivered
at theFollowing
Congretations

Oakwood Hills Church of Christ
DeFuniak Springs, FL
November 15, 1998
11 am

God's University Course for Angels

Dallas Burdette **April 24, 1999**

Thrust Statement: **The angels of God desired to stoop low and look into the mystery of redemption in Christ.**

Scripture Reading: **Ephesians 3:8-13; 1 Peter 1:10-12.**

> Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Ephesians 3:8-11**).[1]

When you reflect upon redemption are you thrilled with joy? Are you as interested in knowing about this mystery that for ages was hidden in God? Even before the creation of the world, this enigma of atonement for sins was out of sight in God (**Ephesians 1:4-10**). This secret of deliverance about God's way of justification for sinful man was not fully revealed until Christ came. The great question was: How could God be just and at the same time justify sinful man? The prophets wondered and searched diligently about this great event; even the angels desired to stoop low and observe this feat on the part of their Creator (**1 Peter 1:10-12**). This is the subject of Paul's words of exhortation to the Ephesians (**1:4-10**). It was through the church that God revealed His manifold wisdom in bringing about salvation for the unrighteous.

THE CHUCH AND ANGELS

Paul was called to proclaim or make plain the mystery of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (**Ephesians 3:8-9**). In **verse 9**, Paul begins his comments about this mystery and concludes his observation with **verse 11**: "according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul's calling and ministry to the Gentiles involves his explaining God's methodology of redemption for the human race. Through the Gospel message, Paul calls attention to the fact that the Christians at Ephesus are a part of the church through whom the "rulers and authorities in heavenly places" are instructed. It is apparent that the apostle is calling attention to the staggering and astounding truth that "rulers and authorities" are the heavenly angels.

Before proceeding with the words of Paul in Ephesians, perhaps it would help to call attention to another witness—the apostle Peter. Peter calls attention to the wonder of this salvation by saying,

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. **Even angels long to look into these things** (**1 Peter 1:10-12**).

The richness of this salvation is so great that even the angels desire to bend low and look into the marvels of this redemption on the part of Christ. Listen again to the words of Paul as he expresses this basic sentiment: "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (**Ephesians 3:10**). Kenneth S. Wuest, former teacher of New Testament Greek at the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, captured the significance of the Greek preposition "by" (through), when he wrote: "The word "by" is from a Greek preposition which speaks of intermediate agency. It is through the agency of the Church that the holy angels are learning the manifold wisdom of God."[2] Once more, Wuest says, correctly in my view, that

> The angels have been contemplating the majesty and the glory of the Godhead all those years, and yet have not learned some things regarding their Creator which the Church can teach them. Peter in his first epistle (1:12) tells us what those things are which "the angels passionately desire to bend low and look into." The angels never had a conception of the love, the grace, the humility, the self-sacrifice of God until they saw it in the Church. There they see Calvary where the Creator died, the Just for the unjust. There they see the incarnation where the Creator took to Himself the form and limitation of a created being. There they see the power of God in transforming a sinful human being into the image of God's dear Son, manifestation of power far greater than that which operated in the creation of the universe. God spoke a universe into being by uttering a word. It took Calvary to make possible the Church.[3]

Paul is asserting that what is happening in the Church is so stupendous and so

glorious that even the angels, as it were, staggered at the "manifold wisdom of God." They were utterly amazed at what they saw "in and through" the Church. This is why Peter could say, "Even angels long to look into these things" (**1 Peter 1:12**). God created these angels; they were in the very presence of God, but according to Paul they had never thought of or even imagined such grace, such love, and such forgiveness. The Gospel of God surpasses even their knowledge and their comprehension. Paul's statement is that this in-depth knowledge about their Creator comes through the Church, that is to say, through us (**Ephesians 3:10**).

Christians are given a portrayal of the Church in her dignity and greatness and glory. The Church consists of people who have been redeemed. Christians are people who have been delivered from the wrath of God. Christians are people who have been delivered from the dominion of sin. Christians are people who have been set free from the curse of the Law. Christians are people who are no longer under condemnation. No wonder the angels of God desired to bend low and look into this great mystery. Are you amazed? If not, why not? Are you thankful for this "great salvation" (**Hebrews 2:3**) that even the prophets and angels were interested in? This mystery of expiation is what Paul calls attention to earlier in his letter to the Ephesians.

> As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (**Ephesians 2:1-10**).

This salvation of God is accomplished "in and through" Christ. This rescue from condemnation is the greatest manifestation of the wisdom of God. When one speaks of the "wisdom of God," perhaps one can say that wisdom is an attribute of God in which He arranges His purposes and plans to accomplish His goals. In other words, God arranges the means by which He brings forth the results of His purpose. One might also say that wisdom is that faculty and quality which enables God to view a situation so that He may decide what to do in order to bring about the desired results. God not only has knowledge but He also has wisdom, that is to say, the capacity and the power to make use of His knowledge.

As one reflects back upon the subject of angels in Peter's first epistle and Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, one realizes that even though the angels did not fully understand the wisdom of God in His quest for fallen man, yet they began to see God's purpose unfolding before their own eyes in His calling sinners to repentance through Jesus His Son. Thus, through the Church the angels witnessed God revealing His great wisdom. The angels had seen the children of Israel going down into Egypt and eventually becoming

slaves. They saw how God smote the Egyptians and saved the Israelites. They also observed the subsequent history of Israel which included their captivity in Babylon in 586 BC. Even six hundred years before Moses, the angels also witnessed God's calling Abraham out of Ur of Chaldea. Yes, the angels even witnessed the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden. But, in spite of all these events, Paul is saying that it was not through all these events in history that that they learned about the manifold wisdom of God, but rather that it was through the Church.

For Paul, the wisdom of God was made known through the results of the message of redemption entrusted to him. It is especially the message of the Gospel of Christ that these "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" understand the "manifold wisdom of God." It is here that the kaleidoscopic, the variegated character, the great varieties of colors in God's wisdom appears. Surely the angels knew the essence of God's wisdom. But here in the Church is the full bloom in all its glory. In other words, the apostle's argument is that the angels have been brought to see God's wisdom in a way that they had never imagined. There were hidden glories in the Gospel of which they knew nothing, even though they had always lived in the presence of God.

The angels, through the Church, saw His justice, His righteousness, His holiness, His truth, His eternal glory, and His unchangeableness. In the Roman letter, Paul addresses the necessity of atonement for the redemption of God's creatures. This means of deliverance in and through Christ upholds the mercy and justice of God. How could God be just and, at the same time, the justifier of sinful man. Paul captures the totality of the dilemma that God faced through the words of the Holy Spirit:

> But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:21-26**).

JESUS IS GOD'S WAY OF DELIVERANCE FROM DESTRUCTION

Do you want to escape the wrath of God? Do you want to shun the dominion of sin? Do you want release from the curse of the Law? Do you want to elude condemnation? Paul gives the answer in the Book of Romans:

Freedom From God's Wrath

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring

Freedom From the Dominion of Sin

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal

eternal life **through Jesus Christ our Lord** (**5:20-21**).

Freedom From the Curse of the Law

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—**through Jesus Christ our Lord**! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (**7:24-25**).

life **in Christ Jesus our Lord** (**6:22-23**).

Freedom From Condemnation

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is **in Christ Jesus our Lord** (**8:38-39**).

CONCLUSION

Lloyd-Jones points out that "We rob God of His glory if we imagine that forgiveness and salvation are simple and easy.[4] Through the cross, Jesus brought both Jew and Gentile together. In Romans Chapter 5, it is "through" Jesus our Lord; in Chapter 6, it is "in" Christ Jesus our Lord; in Chapter 7, it is "through" Jesus our Lord; and in Chapter 8, it is "in" Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul is saying that our redemption is "in and through" our Lord Jesus Christ.

The very things that Paul expresses about redemption are also the things that our Lord expresses to Nicodemus.

> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (**John 3:16-18**).

On another occasion, Jesus responds to some Jews who persecuted Him by saying, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (**John 5:24**). Later, Jesus responds to a crowd that followed Him: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (**John 6:40**). The good news is that this salvation begins with faith and ends with faith. This is that great mystery that even the angels desired to observe. Paul expresses this mystery to the Romans in a nutshell: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (**Romans 1:16-17**). Is it any wonder that Paul prays that the Ephesians will come to understand this wonder of wonders! He wants them to understand this great power of God in accomplishing this feat of justification for sinful man. Paul writes:

> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (**Ephesians 1:18-23**).

Oakwood Hills Church
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: 4-25-1999
Present: 71
Scripture Reading: Dennis Smith

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

[2] Kenneth S. Wuest, "God's University for Angels," in *Golden Nuggets in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 32.

[3] Ibid., 10-11.

[4] D. M. Lloyd-Jones, "God's Strange Design," in *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ: An Exposition of Ephesians 3:1 to 21* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 88. I am deeply grateful for Lloyd-Jones' comments concerning Ephesians 3:10. I would suggest that anyone who reads my sermon also read "God's Strange Design" by Lloyd-Jones, 80-92.

God's Special Concern

For

His People

Dallas Burdette April 10, 1999

Thrust Statement: **God wants His people to shine as lights in the world.**

Scripture Reading: **Philippians 2:14-16a**

> Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing (**Philippians 2:14-16**).[1]

Paul is continuing the development of his thoughts from **verses 12** and **13**. He wants the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (**verse 12**). It is God who initiated this whole movement of salvation so that the Philippians could be forgiven. It is God who inaugurated this salvation so that we may be saved and redeemed. God is concerned about Dallas Burdette; He is concerned about Will and Pam Oldfield; He is concerned about Paul and Rhonda Otto; He is concerned about T.J. and Donna Hughes; He is concerned about Lori Barnes; He is concerned about Dennis and Nikki Smith; He is concerned about Carolyn Ash; yes, God is concerned about everyone that is here today. God is concerned about our sanctification. It is God working in you "to will and to act according to his good purpose" (**Philippians 2:14**). He is concerned about your soul and mine. God is holding on to you, and He will go on working in you until you have arrived at that state for which He destined you.

Are there any here today who have turned away from God? Are there any here today who have "tasted the heavenly gift" (**Hebrews 6:4**)? Are there any here today who have "shared in the Holy Spirit (**6:4**)? Are there any here today that have "tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age" (**6:5**)? My question now is, have you turned away from all this goodness of God? If so, my prayer is that you will

confess your sins and repent. Remember the words of John:

> My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (**1 John 2:1-2**).

Your negligence did not come overnight. Generally, one's digression back into sin is something that happens gradually. Perhaps it starts with missing a Sunday night service; then a Wednesday night Bible study; and, finally, a Sunday morning gathering. Perhaps your downfall started when you ceased reading the Word of God. If you are here today and are not right with God, my prayer is that you will remember the words of the Holy Spirit: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (**Hebrews 3:7,8**). God's invitation is extended to everyone. Listen to the words of John in the book of Revelation:

> The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life (**Revelation 22:17**).

Have you forgotten that "You are the salt of the earth" (**Matthew 5:13**)? Have you forgotten that "You are the light of the world" (**5:14**)? Through Paul, the Holy Spirit is reminding the Philippians that they are to "shine like stars in the universe" (**Philippians 2:15**). How does this shining occur? Listen again as the Holy Spirit speaks about the believers' activity in His service: "as you hold out the word of life" (**2:16**). Are you holding out the word of life? Is your light under a bowl? Or is your light on a stand so that it may give light to everyone in the house (**Matthew 5:15**). God's people are to let their light shine so that people "may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (**5:16**).

WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION

Not only does Paul tell the Philippians what to do, but he also tells them what to avoid. He appeals for Christian conduct. Paul's immediate purpose here is to exhort them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Many can work out their salvation with fear and trembling as long as things are going well, but what happens to this fear and trembling if things unpleasant happen to us? How do we react toward God's grace? Have you lost a loved one? Have you lost a job? Have you lost a husband or wife through divorce? Have you lost your home? Have you lost your good health? If so, how do you react toward the one who sent His Son to die for you?

Paul's immediate purpose is to exhort the Philippians to work out their salvation without "complaining or arguing" (**2:14**). Even though they were undergoing many conflicts, nevertheless, he says,

> Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have (**1:27-30**).

Paul puts all of this in terms of their status before God. Since they are "children of God," he lets them know that this is the central thing in his exhortation to them. He writes:

> Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me (**2:14-18**).

The implication of these Scriptures is: because you are a Christian, then these are the things you must remember and put into practice. As children of God, God's people must not complain as a result of adverse circumstances in life. Not only are God's children not to complain or argue but they are also to maintain purity in their lives. One cannot divorce Christian ethics and morality from the only basis from which ethics and morality derive. One cannot separate God and ethics. One of the reasons that Paul assigns for not complaining and arguing is that God's people "may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe" **(2:15-16**).

Christians are different! Are you different? Christians are to be different because they are children of God. We read about one being born of the Spirit, one receiving the Spirit, one being regenerated, one being born again, or being created anew. Yes, every Christian receives something of the divine nature. It is in this vein that Peter says,
For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (**1 Peter 1:18-19**).

Since we, as Christians, are redeemed, then Peter exhorts a change in our life style:

> Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (**2:1-3**).

We are to do what God asks us to do. "Do everything without complaining or arguing" (**Philippians 2:14**) takes us back to **verses 12-13**. Every believer should commit to memory the words of Paul in **verse 13**: "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." "Without complaining" is a striking statement. One cannot but help reflect upon the history of Israel, especially their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Paul did not cite **Psalms 106**, which is a history of Israel, but this **verse** (**14**) is reminiscent of this history by the Psalmist. Paul is saying in effect that the Christian life, too, is a pilgrimage. Paul is saying in effect that you will find as the Children of Israel did that God sometimes puts His people in places that they do not like. In other words, there may be days in which you do not have water to quench your thirst; there may be day in which your food will not be very pleasing; there may be days in which your enemy confronts you.

In your walk with God, I remind each of you that it is God working in you, both to will and to do. He is leading you and perfecting you in the process. There may be times in

which you will say, "Why me, Lord?" When we complain we doubt. Complaining is indicative of a lack of faith. It leads to poor testimony; it brings disgrace upon the Christian name. To sum up our message today, I remind each of you of the trials that Jesus endured without complaint:

> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (**Hebrews 12:1-3**).

Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted (**Matthew 4:1-11**), but He did not grumble or complain. He responded to the various temptations by citing Scripture. You remember the accounts that record the Gethsemane episode. Even though God led Him to Gethsemane, he never complained (**26:36-56**). No wonder Paul reminded the Philippians: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 2:5**).

It is God who initiated this whole movement of salvation so that we may be forgiven, saved, and redeemed. God wants sanctification for us. First of all, He sent Jesus in order that there may be a people sanctified: "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption**" (1 Corinthians 1:30**). The King James Version employs the word "sanctification" rather than the word "holiness." In Jesus one is holy because Jesus is holy. Jesus is <u>our</u> "righteousness, holiness and redemption." Even though one is holy in Jesus, there is still what may be called progressive sanctification. In other words, every believer is continuously doing what Paul expresses to the Philippians:

> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (**Philippians 3:12-21**).

God is holding on to you, and He will go on working in you until you have arrived at that state for which He has destined you. I encourage each of you to "stand firm in the

Lord" (**4:1**).

Oakwood Hills Church of Christ
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: 4-11-1999
Time: 11 am
Responses:
Present:

On the 14th day of April 1999, Mike O'Brian and David Starkey requested baptism. Dennis Smith, one of the leaders in the Oakwood Hills Church, baptized both of these men. Mike meets with the Oakwood Hills Church as a result of the evangelism of Leyda Lewis. David Starkey meets with the Oakwood Hills Church as a result of the evangelism of Will Oldfield.

Both Leyda and Will are seeking to fulfill the Great Commission issued by Jesus to His disciples (**Matthew 28: 18-20**). The Great Commission is no doubt what Paul had in mind when he wrote his second letter to Corinth:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God (**2 Corinthians 5:17-20**).

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

Grace Increased More

Dallas Burdette **May 1, 1999**

Thrust Statement: Where sin increased, grace increased more.

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:20-21.

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (**Romans 5:20-21**).[1]

The purpose of this message is to give encouragement to those whose hearts are dark and black with sin. The objective of this sermon is to give hope to those without hope. The design of this sermon is to create peace of mind for the troubled mind. The intent of this message is to call attention to God's grace. The words "grace increased all the more" should thrill everyone's heart to the core. When anyone considers the blackness of his/her own heart, then these verses penned by Paul should cause every Christian to sing with thankfulness. Are you conscious of the glory that God has brought about "in and through" Christ. This accomplishment of redemption in Christ dwarfs and engulfs even the mighty acts of God in Creation. In the creation of the world, God spoke and it was done, but in redemption, it took Calvary to bring about man's salvation—not just spoken words. Are you rejoicing in the victory of grace over sin? Are you under grace? Or are you under law? If you are under grace, then you are "in Christ." If you are under law, then you are in Adam. No man/woman can appreciate the greatness and the glory of grace unless he/she has a clear understanding of what sin has done to him/her and to everyone else since the fall of Adam.

THE LAW OF GOD

The Law of God does not make man sinful, but rather, it displays his sinfulness. In the presence of God's perfect standard, everyone sees his/her shortcomings. Is there a person here today that is not conscious of his/her own imperfection or his/her own weakness. Can anyone say, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector" (**Luke 18:11**). The design of the Law is the revealing of man's offences. No one can look at the law of God and be vocal in his/her defense. No, God's law shuts every man's mouth:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin (**Romans 3:19-20**).

The Law of God drives everyone out of self-righteousness and into the Lord Jesus Christ through "whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (**Colossians 1:14**). It is the sinner who has had a glimpse of hell who is most appreciative of the glories of heaven. Paul paints a rather dismal picture of man's utter helplessness when he/she looks at the Law of God. There is no justification through the Law because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (**Romans 3:23**). But God in His infinite love and mercy provides a way of redemption. This salvation is through faith in the blood of Jesus: "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood" (**Romans 3:23**).

Paul says that it is "through the law we become conscious of sin" (**Romans 3:20**). The Law of God stirs the mud at the bottom of the pool and proves how wretched the waters are. The Law compels man to see that sin dwells in him. The Law reveals our transgressions and empties us of our self-righteousness. The Law drives us to the Lord Jesus "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (**Colossians 1:14**). The Law strips everyone of his/her cloak of self-justification and drives everyone to seek the robe of Christ's righteousness. Paul writes very pungently concerning the severity of the Law: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God" (**Romans 3:19**).

Every man and woman stands naked before God. If anyone desires to stand clothed before God, it must be with the righteousness of God—righteousness made available through Jesus. Paul writes: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (**Romans 3:21-22**). Thank God that this justification or right standing before God is by grace, not by works. Again, Paul captures the unsearchable riches of Christ in his Roman letter: ". . . justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (**Romans 3:24**). Are you conscious of the meaning of "grace"? Are you aware that there could be no grace if there were no guilt? Are you sensitive to the meaning of "mercy"? There can be no mercy where there is no sin.

If you have never broken the Law, then you are not guilty. If you think that you have never sinned, then you will not care for this message—"Grace Increased More." If you do not care for this message, you will never ask for grace, because you have no sense of shame. Before you can accept the mercy of God, you must plead guilty to the formal charge of the Law of God—"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (**Romans 3:23**). You are not in a position to receive grace until the Law shuts your mouth. The Law is designed to bring you to grace. Do you wish to escape

condemnation? If so, it must be through faith. Paul says, the "law brings wrath" (**Romans 4:15**), but "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (**Romans 6:23**). I hasten to add, if you are in Christ, you are no longer under law (**Romans 7**); Since this is so, then you are no longer under condemnation (**Romans 8:1**). This is the point that Paul stresses to the Christians at Rome: "where there is no law there is no transgression" (**Romans 4:15**).

GRACE INCREASED ALL THE MORE

Our major text today is: "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (**Romans 5:20**). Before Paul makes this statement, he develops the scenario of how one sin overthrew all humanity. In other words, the world still suffers as a result of Adam's sin: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (**Romans 5:12**). Again, Paul forcefully brings home this point: "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (**Romans 5:17**).

Once more, I call attention to the words of our text: "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (**Romans 5:20**). The Lord Jesus came into the world, not only to put away Adam's sin, but all the sins that have followed. The world is full of sin. But "where sin increased, grace increased all the more." Paul in this letter gives us proof concerning the increase of grace: "Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification" (**Romans 5:16**). Thank God that the Divine Substitute has put away those sins committed by men and women since the first offense in the Garden of Eden. Thus, Paul calls attention to the justice of God in presenting Jesus as the Divine Substitute for the sins of mankind:

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:25-26**).

"Grace increased all the more" as a result of God's presenting Jesus as the means of salvation for sinful man. Yes, Jesus bore our sins upon the cross of Calvary. John the Baptist describes the mission of Jesus this way: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**). Isaiah, 700 years before the *Logos* became flesh, foretold the purpose of Jesus coming:

Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;

and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

[7] He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
[8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
And who can speak of his descendants?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was stricken (**Isaiah 53:4-8**).

CONCLUSION

Are we rejoicing in the victory of grace over sin? Yes, we rejoice because we have understood this "increased more," and we have a sense of victory and now go boldly into the presence of God through Jesus our High Priest. The Hebrew writer captures this privilege of those under grace: "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (**Hebrews 4:16**). We have assurance; we have joy.

But are you asking the question, what about the darkness and blackness of my own heart? Yes, you begin there! You must start there! Why? Because this consciousness of your own sinful nature will cause you to fly to Christ and rejoice in the superabundance of grace. The more you know about the blackness of your own heart the more you will sing about God's grace—"grace increased all the more."

Oakwood Hills church
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: 5-9-1999
Time: 11am
Present:
Responses:

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984 unless stated otherwise.

Judgment and Forgiveness

Thrust statement: Christians experience God's judgment of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Scripture reading: John 12:27-33; Isaiah 28:9-13, 19-22

God the Judge?

Does God judge people today? Can one avoid God's judgment of condemnation? How do you reconcile God's wrath with God's mercy? Should God judge you with wrath or mercy? Are the two concepts incompatible? How many Christians have difficulty with the judgments of God in the Old Testament? Is God fair in His discretion of mercy? Is God righteous in His vengeance on the rebellious? Should God punish the wicked? Should God still chastise the wicked even when they repent? Do you visualize God as a God of wrath? Or do you envision God as a God of compassion? Can God be both? Is the anger of God against sin believable to modern man? Is God's anger plausible to you as an individual? Is the rage of God against wrongdoing acceptable to the average Christian today? Since God is holy, should He be concerned with sin and punishment? Should He allow a Hitler to go unpunished? Should He allow a Stalin to go unpunished? Should He allow a Pol Pot to go unpunished? Should He allow me to go unpunished? How bad is sin?

As you view your own life, How do you perceive judgment? Do you believe that you are so bad that God will zap you? Do you believe that God is like a motorcycle cop, waiting for the least infraction of the law to zap you? Is your concept of God too small? Do you even deserve any judgment of condemnation or punishment? Just how do you view yourself and sin? Do you say, "Well, I am not so bad"?

When God portrayed radical judgment against the whole creation in Genesis 3, did God overreact to the

sin of Adam and Eve? What about the worldwide flood in Genesis 6? When God dispersed the people at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, was God justified in this judgment?

When God said, "for I am grieved that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7), did He include us? Do I believe that God could say to me, "I'm sorry that I made Dallas Burdette? Are we so sure that God spoke about the other fellows and not us? Do we reason, How could God be sorry that He made you and me? Tyrants like Khomeini, certainly; despots like Hitler, absolutely; totalitarians like Pol Pot, unquestionably; oppressors like Stalin, yes indeed; terrorists like the Oklahoma bombers, of course. But God could never be sympathetic that He made you and me, so we think.

Israel and God's Judgment

Should God have punished Israel? Yes, we respond? Should God punish us? Well, that's a different story, isn't it? As a result of our concept of God's judgment, the passages in Isaiah, as cited above for our Scripture reading, become meaningless to us. Nevertheless, Isaiah pictures the judgment of God upon Israel by the Assyrians. Isaiah describes the punishment of Israel as "a little here, a little there" (Isaiah 28:10). Also, in the Isaiah passages, we witness the "tick-tock of God's judgment." In other words, Isaiah is saying that God is gradually destroying their lives because of their wickedness. For Isaiah, God judges us in all the little things of life – "a little here, a little there." God's judgment worked in the lives of the people in Isaiah's day. But does God's judgment continue to work its way into our lives? In the words of Isaiah, God's correction is "a little here, a little there— so that they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured" (Isaiah 28:13).

But as Christians we resist that, don't we? What about the natural catastrophes occurring in our nation today? Could these devastations be "a little here and a little there"? Why do we contest the judgment of God? Is it not because it disturbs our picture of God? Does the portrayal of God as judge disturb our mental image of God? Isn't God a God of love, we ask? Is this view of God as judge against the grace we have experienced from Him in the person of Jesus Christ? Perhaps, for many, this range of vision of God's wrath does not fit in with His grace, as we see it. To say that the God of the cross is at the same time "like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah" (Hosea 5:12) is not consistent with our concept of God's mercy. Or is it? God, according to Hosea, eats away at the fabric of our lives and like dry rot He undermines our fragile foundation in order to call into question our understanding of the nature of God whom we worship. God wanted His people to admit their guilt and then He would heal them. In fact, God says through Hosea:

> Then I will go back to my place
> until they admit their guilt.
> And they will seek my face;
> in their misery they will earnestly seek me" (Hosea 5:15).
> Again, Hosea says,
> "Come, let us return to the LORD.
> He has torn us to pieces
> but he will heal us;
> he has injured us (Hosea 6:1).

God is still willing to heal. He will heal you too if you will only turn to His Son Jesus. If one does not turn to the Lord for healing, there can only be condemnation, not eternal life. Does God's wrath appear strange and alien to you? God has no choice but to punish evil doings because of His holy nature. Still, to modern man, judgment appears to be out of harmony with his concept of God as a God of mercy,

kindness and love. Yes, even Isaiah also acknowledges an apparent incongruity with such a witness to God as Hosea witnessed concerning God's anger. This kind of wrath appears to be foreign to the nature of God.

> The LORD will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim,
> he will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon—
> to do his work, his **strange work**,
> and perform his task, **his alien task** (Isaiah 28::21).

This "strange work" and "alien task" is contrary to the general concept of God's mercy. And yet, there is no softening of the message by Isaiah:

> Now stop your mocking,
> or your chains will become heavier;
> the Lord, the LORD Almighty, has told me
> of the destruction decreed against the whole land (Isaiah 28:22).

God's Judgment Centers in Jesus

Could it be that the God of love and mercy is also truly the Lord, and that He will not be satisfied with anything less than the complete surrender of one's life in worship. Since God is Lord, He must judge evil. The death of Christ upon the cross testifies to God's judgment against sin. We may deny God's punishment against the awfulness of sin, but Jesus did not share in this denial. In fact, Jesus, through His self-sacrifice, took our sins upon Himself and allowed sin to be put to death in His body (Isaiah 53). Isaiah (739 BC) foretold about God's Suffering Servant that would deal with the problem of sin:

> Surely he took up our infirmities
> and carried our sorrows,
> yet we considered him stricken by God,
> smitten by him, and afflicted.
> But he was pierced for our transgressions,
> he was crushed for our iniquities;
> the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
> and by his wounds we are healed.
> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
> each of us has turned to his own way;
> and the LORD has laid on him
> the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Jesus is God's way of dealing with the sin problem. Sin has to die if God is Lord. Jesus accepted that judgment of death for "us all." He willingly gave his life for our sins to glorify God's justice, love, and mercy. Jesus came to the planet earth to make atonement for the sin dilemma. What did Jesus say about His own mission? Jesus clearly states His mission: "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour." (John 12:27).

Paul's Concept of God's Justice

Since God is just, must He not punish sin? Can God allow sin to go unpunished? Is there a way out for man's sinfulness? How? Well, Paul explains how God can be just and at the same time forgive man's

sinfulness. Paul wrote:

> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26).

How did God solve the sin dilemma? Jesus is God's response! God presented Jesus as atonement for the sins of mankind. In this transaction of atonement, God demonstrated His justice in that He did not allow sin to go unpunished**.** Again, we ask, **God the judge?** Yes! God judged sin and still judges sin. How could a righteous judge not judge man's sinfulness? Paul painted a rather dismal picture of mankind in his iniquities:

> What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written:
>
> "There is no one righteous, not even one;
> [11] there is no one who understands,
> no one who seeks God.
> All have turned away,
> they have together become worthless;
> there is no one who does good,
> not even one."
> "Their throats are open graves;
> their tongues practice deceit."
> "The poison of vipers is on their lips."
> "Their mouths are full of cursing and
> bitterness."
> "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
> ruin and misery mark their ways,
> and the way of peace they do not know."
> "There is no fear of God before their
> eyes" (Romans 3:9-18).

Is there no escape from God's judgment? Yes, God has provided a way of escape for mankind. How? Paul explained the "how" in his Roman letter:

> But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Romans 3:20-21).

God's final lordship is that He puts us to death in order to make us alive in Jesus. He does away with our evil in order to make us new. He also subjects us to daily judgments to recreate us for eternal love. In our reading of Isaiah, one discovers that even in the midst of a flood of wrath, God did not leave Israel without hope. In fact, Isaiah saw a new cornerstone:

"See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation;
the one who trusts will never be dismayed.
I will make justice the measuring line
and righteousness the plumb line; (Isaiah 28:16-17)

Even in the face of God's judgments, God still announces hope for Israel. In the midst of destruction, God speaks of salvation. In other words, Isaiah describes the way of escape from God's judgment. The book of Isaiah is filled with messianic prophecies of hope. This "stone" is none other than Jesus, the hope of mankind – "the one who trusts will never be dismayed." Jesus reminded the chief priests and the elders of the people that this "stone" prophecy related to Himself (Matthew 21:42). In order to accomplish this redemption, Jesus became atonement for the sins of the people. As Jesus confronts the horror of being lifted up on the cross, He promises that death will lead to eternal life for us all.

> Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:31-36).

Again, the question is, Does God judge? And the answer is, yes! Do you reject the judgment of God as inconceivable? Denial of God's doomsday will not allow you to escape His correction. In order for one to escape God's wrath of condemnation, one must put his or her trust in Jesus. Dismissal of Jesus brings one under God's vengeance. God has surrendered judgment to the Son. What does the Son say about this judgment?

> Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.
>
> "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (John 5:22-24).

Do you wish to escape the judgment of God? Then, hear the words of Jesus and believe Him who sent Jesus. This one, says Jesus, will escape God's wrath of condemnation.

PREACHED: Grassy Church of Christ (Arab, Alabama)
November 23, 1997, 11 am Service

Salvation for a Call

Dallas Burdette **July 3, 1999**

Thrust statement: **Salvation is available to anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord.**

Scripture reading: **Romans 10:11-17**

What does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord? Paul cites **Joel 2:32** to illustrate from the Old Testament that in the messianic age, salvation is available to all who call upon Him. Salvation is not limited to the Jews only, but rather salvation is offered to all nations. Just as God has not limited salvation to the Jews only, neither has He limited salvation to certain individuals. For Paul, salvation is available to "everyone" who calls upon the name of the Lord. In other words, Salvation is offered for a call. Have you called upon the name of the Lord for salvation? If you want salvation from condemnation, then you must call upon the name of the Lord. If you want freedom from God's wrath, then you must call upon the name of the Lord. Salvation is not based on works of the Law, but rather, on faith. Salvation is in and through Jesus.

Paul says that the Lord "richly blesses all who call on him" (**Romans 10:12**).[1] Do you want to be richly blessed, then you must call upon the name of the Lord. Again, Paul writes, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (**10:13**). The Greek text is especially strong in regards to one's calling upon the Lord. Paul says, "everyone" (πᾶς, *pas*) and "whoever" (ὅ ἄn, *hos an*) calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The Jews wanted to limit salvation only to the fleshly descendants of Abraham. The Jews could see no salvation outside of certain liturgies and human elbow grease. For Paul, salvation is experienced only on the principle of faith, not works of the law. Paul calls attention to the Jews' concept of salvation in his epistle to Rome:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (**Romans 10:1-4**).

Paul zeros in on the righteousness of God that is available "for everyone who believes" (**10:4**). The Jews did not submit themselves to God's righteousness made available through faith in Jesus, but rather they sought to accomplish their own righteousness through Law compliance. Paul calls for reflection on the fact that redemption is through faith and confession, not through law conformity. In this same chapter (**10**), Paul speaks of the faith that believes and the faith that confesses: "for it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (**10:10**). Having set forth the principle of right standing before God, he proceeds to explain: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (**10:13**). God accepts all upon Gospel terms: "As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (**10:11**). The Greek text is: "everyone believing on him will not be put to shame" (πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ αὐτῷ, *pas ho pisteuon ep' auto*) In other words, it is ask and have.

URGENCY OF THE CALL FOR SALVATION

Earlier, the question was asked: What does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord? The word *call* signifies "to make an appeal." For instance, Paul employed the word *call* in his appeal to Caesar: "If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!" (**Acts 25:11**). For the believer, to call upon the name of the Lord is to confess one's distance from God and to appeal to Him for mercy. If you have not appealed to God for mercy, then there is still distance between you and God.

Remember the words Isaiah wrote concerning the distance of Israel from God: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (**Isaiah 59:2**). Is it any wonder that everyone must call upon the name of the Lord? While it is true that everyone is at a distance from God, yet everyone should remember that God is not far from us. It is in this vein that Paul says, "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (**Acts 17:26-27**).

Because God is "not far from each one of us," then men/women should seek Him, reach out to Him, and find Him. Do you want to close this distance? Then, you must call upon the name of the Lord. You must believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that "Jesus is Lord" if you want to close the distance between you and God (**Romans 10:8-11**).

As stated earlier, the words in our text (**Romans 10:13**) is cited by Paul from **Joel 2:32**. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, also appeals to the words of Joel in order to draw attention to the urgency of this salvation that is available to anyone who wishes to have eternal life (**Acts 2:21**). If you wish to possess eternal life, then you must repent of your sins and confess the name of Jesus and submit to baptism into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:19**). Paul says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (**Romans 3:23**). As one looks at the law of God, the law shuts everyone's mouth.

Paul captures this plight of man in his letter to Roman Christians: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth

may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God" (**3:19**). Everyone is guilty and held accountable to God. Thus God devised a way for man's dilemma. Paul sets forth the answer in this epistle. Listen to God's method of dealing with man's sin problem: "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (**Romans 3:25-26**).

If one does not believe in Him, then the "sacrifice of atonement" does not deal with his/her sin problem. In other words, one is still under the curse of the Law. If one is not in Christ, then everyone is guilty, everyone is under the wrath of God (**Romans 5**), everyone is under the dominion of sin (**Romans 6**), everyone is under law (**Romans 7**), and everyone is under condemnation (**Romans 8**). Thus, Paul concludes: "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (**Romans 3:20**). Can one escape the wrath of God? Can one escape the dominion of sin? Can one escape the curse of the Law? Can one escape condemnation? Is there any hope? Yes, there is! The answer is found in one's calling upon the Lord.

Paul, having painted one of the most dreadful conditions of humanity, employs two of the greatest words in all of the English language—"but now." Listen to Paul as he captures the wonder of it all: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (**3:21**). Paul began this epistle by calling attention to the glorious gospel: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (**Romans 1:16-17**). The "good news" is that God has made available His righteousness through faith. Paul says that it is for "everyone who believes."

Have you ever sounded out this call of distance? The Scriptures sound forth the urgency of this call: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (**Hebrews 3:7-8**). The author of Hebrews attributed this saying to the Holy Spirit (**8:7**). In fact, the Hebrew writer cites from the Psalms and attributes this quotation to the Holy Spirit. This particular Psalm that the Hebrew author quotes warns the children of Israel: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah" (**Psalms 95:7-8**). Do you wish to close the distance between you and God? If so, then "do not harden your hearts." Today is the day of salvation. Everyone must heed the invitation put forth by John as he concludes his book on the revelation of Jesus Christ: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (**Revelation 22:17**).

THE UNIQUENESS OF THIS SALVATION

The uniqueness of God's salvation is that it is available on terms that anyone can understand and receive. When Paul wrote to the churches in the province of Galatia, he called attention to the uniqueness of Abraham's right standing before God. Paul drives home the point of Abraham's justification and theirs:

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (**Galatians 3:6-9**).

Do you want salvation? Again, the words of Paul are appropriate to cite: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (**Romans 10:13**). One cannot help but recall the words of the angel's announcement about the birth of Jesus: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (**Matthew 1:21**). Again, I ask, do you want salvation? In your answer to this question, consider the story of Cornelius the centurion who also wanted salvation. An angel of God appeared to Cornelius—a man who was devout and God fearing (**Acts 10:2**)—and informed Cornelius to send men to Joppa and call for Peter. After Peter's arrival at the home of Cornelius, Peter, after the preliminaries, delivered a message about redemption. In the proclamation of the good news of God, he said, "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (**10:43**).

CONCLUSION

The Scriptures speak of the universality of salvation. Paul says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (**Romans 10:13**). This invitation extends to all. Jesus told Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (**John 3:16-18**).

John records another conversation of Jesus with the crowds. Some wanted to know, "What must we do to do the works God requires? (**John 6:28**). Jesus responded by saying, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (**6:29**). Do you want to do the works required by God? Then, I encourage you to believe in the One He has sent. Do not forget the words of Simon Peter in his response to the Lord's question about their faithfulness: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (**John 6:68-69**).

Oakwood Hills Church
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: 7-4-1999
Time: 11 am
Present: 68

[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

The Grace of God

Dallas Burdette **June 4, 1999**

Thrust Statement: **God's grace teaches us how to live.**

Scripture Reading: **Matthew 1:18-25; Titus 2:11-15; John 1:14-18.**

The grace of God should thrill every soul that is here. Without God's grace there is not one person that is here that could be saved. I am wondering if you have responded to the grace of God. Have you turned from or to God's grace? If you have turned from God's grace, then I encourage you to repent of your sins and once more accept that which God has offered to you through His Son Jesus Christ—eternal life. Do you not remember reading from the Gospel of John the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in which our Lord Jesus told him: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (**John 3:16-17**).[1]

Do you think that your sins are too vile, too base, too wretched, too low, too bad, and too vicious for God to forgive? There is not one who is present who cannot cry out as Paul did in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth: "by the grace of God I am what I am" **(1 Corinthians 15:10**). If you are saved, I pray that you will always remember that you are what you are by the grace of God. But Paul did not stop with his acknowledgement of his rebirth; he continued his thoughts by saying, "his grace to me was not without effect" (**1 Corinthians 15:10**). I ask you the question: Is God's grace without effect in your life? Has God's grace made a difference in how you live? Has God's grace made a difference in how you treat others? Has God's grace made a difference in how you treat your wife or husband? Has God's grace made a difference in how you treat your

children? Has God's grace made a difference in how you treat yours brothers and sisters in Christ?

Paul became a Christian as a result of God's grace. And as a result of that grace, God's grace saturates Paul's letters. Does God's grace saturate your conversation? Listen to Paul as he exclaims, "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (**Romans 3:24**). Again, he extols the grace of God to demonstrate the greatness of God's grace even in the face of sin: "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (**Romans 5:20**). Once more, Paul brings us face to face with the savior, saying, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (**2 Corinthians 8:9**). Again, he tells us that "by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

GRACE LIBERATES MEN AND WOMEN

Our Lord Jesus Christ redeems us and acquits us through grace. God's grace has appeared to all men. God extends an invitation. Jesus extends an invitation. The Spirit extends an invitation. The *ekklesia* of God extends an invitation. John the apostle says, "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (**Revelation 22:17**). God's grace is for all. It is in this vein that Paul writes: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (**Titus 2:11**). Not only did God redeem us through our Lord Jesus, but He also ordained that His people should be involved in good works.

Listen again to Paul as he reminds Titus of this truth: "It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good (**Titus 2:12-14**). This is the same truth that Paul writes to the Christians of Ephesus: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (**Ephesians 2:10**).

God Redeems Us from the Slavery of Sin

Every Christian is a new creation in Christ Jesus. But this rebirth is not man's doing, but God's. Paul says, "we are God's workmanship." Since Christians have a new nature, then "we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (**Romans 6:6-7**). Your life is a life that is to be lived to God. Paul again reminds the Christians at Rome:

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer

yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace (**Romans 6:8-10**).

One cannot help but recall the words of Peter as he calls attention to redemption in Christ: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (**1 Peter 1:18-19**). No wonder Paul tells the Christians at Colosse: "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (**Colossians 1:14**). John records a scene in heaven in which the twenty-four elders sang a new song about the Lamb of God:

You are worthy to take the scroll
  and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
  and with your blood you purchased men for God
  from every tribe and language and people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
  and they will reign on the earth."

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
  to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
  and honor and glory and praise!"
Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
  be praise and honor and glory and power,
  for ever and ever!"

The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped (**Revelation 5:9-14**).

ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S REDEMPTION FROM SIN: JOHN NEWTON

On March 10, 1748, John Newton (1725-1807), while returning to England from Africa during a storm turned to Thomas a Kempis's book, *Imitation of Christ*. God used the message of this book by Kempis (1380-1471) to plant the seed that eventually led to his conversion and repudiation of slavery. At the age of thirty-nine, John Newton was ordained by the Anglican Church. His work for the next fifteen years (1764-1779) was a very successful ministry. He repeatedly told of his early life and conversion. During this time he introduced the singing of hymns that expressed the simple, heartfelt faith of his preaching rather than the singing of the Psalms. Until the time of his death at the age of eighty-two, John Newton never ceased to marvel at God's mercy and grace that had so changed his life.[2]

One of the most beloved songs—even to this day—is the hymn that he wrote about his redemption, "Amazing Grace." Listen to the words of Newton as he poured out his heart in amazement:

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found.
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the Sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Do you stand in awe of God's matchless grace? Do you want to be free from the condemnation of sin? Do you want eternal life? Then, remember the words of Jesus: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (**John 8:36**). On an earlier occasion, Jesus tells a crowd: "My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (**John 6:40**). Jesus paid the price of redemption. In order for God to demonstrate His justice and, at the same time, justify sinful man, He had to give His Son. Paul paints a picture of man's redemption with these words:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:21-26**).

This salvation is so great that even the heavenly host broke out in praise. Prior to this rapture of praise, Luke records the visit of an angel to some shepherds in a field:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (**Luke 2:8-12**).

Luke then informs Theophilus (Book written to Theophilus—**Luke 1:3**) that "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests'" (**Luke 2:14-15**).

Prior to the birth of Jesus, Matthew gives his readers additional information concerning the prophecy of this birth. Since Joseph, future husband of Mary, did not know about this miraculous involvement on the part of God, he sought to divorce her quietly. But following Joseph's contemplation of divorce from Mary, after he was informed that Mary was pregnant, then an angel of God intervened. Listen as Matthew reports an angel's admonition concerning this pregnancy:

"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us" (**Matthew 1:20-23**).

John calls attention to the wonder of it all when he says,

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known (**John 1:14-18**).

CONCLUSION

What does all this mean to you? Does God's grace affect your life? Are you zealous for good works? Are you denying ungodliness and worldly lust? Are you kind and gentle? Do you love the people of God? In concluding this message on "The Grace of God," it is appropriate that I leave with you the words of one who understood the wonder of it all. In Paul's letter to Titus, he reminds him of this grace and how it should affect his life and those who have been redeemed:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all

authority. Do not let anyone despise you (**Titus 2:11-15**).

Oakwood Hills Church
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: June 18, 1999
Time: 7 p.m.
Occasion: Gospel Meeting
Present:

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

[2] See Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1982), 28-31.

The Savior of Sinners

Dallas Burdette **June 11,1999**

Thrust Statement: **Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.**

Scripture Reading: **1 Timothy 1:12-17**

Do you want redemption from your sins? Do you want eternal life? Do you want to spend eternity with God? Do you want to escape the wrath of God? Are you afraid to die? Are you terrified about dying because you know that you fall short of God's glory? Are you alarmed about the judgment? How are you answering these questions? Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, 3000 troubled individuals asked the apostles what to do to be saved. Luke records their response to Peter's castigation of them for crucifying the Lord of Glory (**Acts 2:36**). When they came under conviction, Luke says, " When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (**Acts 2:37**).[1]

Do you think that you are too sinful for God to save? Have you ever persecuted Christians? Have you ever pursued Christians in order to imprison them for their faith? Have you ever stood at the feet of someone who was murdered for his/her faith in Christ? Well, the one who wrote our Scripture reading did persecute and incarcerate Christians for their faith. And because of this period in his life, he writes about his remorse and God's mercy:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance**: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.** But for that very reason I was

shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen (**1 Timothy 1:12-17**).

Paul says that God is able to display His unlimited patience by using him as an example for those who believe on Him and receive eternal life. One can understand why Paul stood in awe as he spoke of this abundant grace.

THE COMING OF THE SAVIOR

As Paul reflected upon the grandeur of it all, he declares that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (**1 Timothy 1:15**). Matthew also records the announcement of His birth and His objective in coming: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (**Matthew 1:21**). John writes that "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (**John 1:14**). Jesus tells Nicodemus that

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (**John 3:16-18**).

Is it any wonder that Paul exclaims, "Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (**1 Timothy 3:16**).

THE NAME CHRIST

Matthew begins his gospel with these words: "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (**Matthew 1:1**). In this passage, Matthew combines the names Jesus and Christ. In this same chapter, Matthew records the announcement of an angel of the Lord concerning the birth of Jesus: "you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (**1:21**). Following the birth of Jesus, Herod called the people's chief priests and teachers of the law to inquire about the Christ: "where the Christ was to be born" (**Matthew 2:4**)? Toward the end of Christ's ministry, he asked the disciples: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (**Matthew 16:13**). Following the various responses (**16:14**), "Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (**Matthew 16:16**).

The name "Jesus" means Jehovah is salvation, but then the name "Christ" means anointed. In other words, Jesus the savior is God's Anointed One. Jesus is THE ANOINTED ONE OF GOD for the salvation of humanity. Peter, before the Sanhedrin, exclaims: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (**Acts 4:12**). Jesus is the answer to man's greatest need—eternal life. Only Jesus can take care of man's sin problem. Just the mention of the name of Jesus causes ten thousand times ten thousands to cry out: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (**1 Timothy 1:15**). Paul burst forth in rapturous language to the Philippians concerning the name Jesus:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of **Jesus** every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ** is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father (**Philippians 2:9-11**).

THE NATURE OF CHRIST

Perhaps, one can say that Christ reveals His divine nature, while Jesus reveals His human nature. Jesus is our Lord's name, while Christ is our Lord's official appellation. Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, calls attention to the resurrection of Jesus and says, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (**Acts 2:36**). John in writing his Gospel refers to the deity as well as to the humanity of our Lord Jesus. He declares that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.[2] He was with God in the beginning" (**John 1:1-2**). Then, in **verse 14**, he again says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

Jesus, in his prayer to the Father, prays, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (**John 17:5**). Thomas, in his encounter with the Lord after His resurrection, acknowledged Jesus as "My Lord and my God!" (**John 20:28**). Paul also addresses His divine as well as human nature to the Philippians:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross! (**Philippians 2:5-8**).

My prayer for all of you is that you remember the words of Paul to Timothy: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (**1 Timothy 2:5**). Jesus came into the world to seek and save the lost.

REDEMPTION IN THE SAVIOR

When one speaks of redemption, one cannot help but recall the words of Paul to Timothy: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (**1 Timothy 1:15**). In the redeeming work of Christ, Paul found pardon. But Paul's point of emphasis is not just for himself, but rather, for the whole world. Pardon is for you and me; it is for everyone who

is here. Paul declares that he "was shown mercy" (**1:13**). He was a former "blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man" (**1:13**). But, in spite of all these terrible crimes, he says, "The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly" (**1:14**). Paul was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man against Christianity, but inspite of all his sins, he says, "I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (**1:16**).

The Savior's Power

How often do individuals say, "I am afraid that I would not be able to keep it up." Did Paul say this also? No! Here is what he said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service" (**1 Timothy 1:12**). Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, declares: "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 1:6**). If Christians can ever capture the concept that it is God working in them, then they will no longer say, "I am afraid that I would not be able to keep it up." Christians are to shine as stars in the universe in a crooked and depraved generation (**1:15**). Again, listen to Paul: "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (**Philippians 2:12-13**).

The Savior's Purpose

First Timothy 1:16 is a verse that every person should focus upon in his/her walk with God. In seeking to call attention to neglected truths, repetition is unavoidable. Listen again to what Paul is saying: "for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." There was a purpose for which the Lord had saved him. There is also a purpose for which the Lord has saved you. God has a plan for all who enter into Christ's redemptive purpose. It is written: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (**Ephesians 2:10**).

Christians no longer live for themselves, but rather, they live for God. God's purpose is that no believer should live for himself/herself. Paul captures the essence of the Christian life in his second letter to the Christians at Corinth: "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (**2 Corinthians 5:14-15**). Having said this, Paul continues the development of this thought of living for God:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (**2 Corinthians 5:17-21**).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I remind each of you—non-Christians and Christians—to not receive the grace of God in vain. Christians can receive God's grace in vain by the way they live. Non-Christians can receive the grace of God in vain by rejecting God's way of salvation, namely, Jesus Christ. Paul warns the Corinthians: "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (**2 Corinthians 6:1-2**).

Do you want salvation? Do you want redemption from your life of sin? Do you want peace with God? Do you want to escape the wrath of God? Do you want to escape the dominion of sin? Do you want to escape condemnation? Then remember the words of Paul: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (**1 Timothy 1:15**). Christ Jesus is an acceptable Savior. The truth about the savior of sinners is followed in our text by a doxology of honor and glory to the Lord Jesus whom Paul calls "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever" (**1:17**). The words of Isaac Watts express this so beautifully:

> When I survey the wondrous cross,
> On which the Prince of glory died,
> My richest gain I count but loss,
> And pour contempt on all my pride.
>
> Where the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Oakwood Hills Church
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: June 20, 1999
Time: 10 am
Occasion: Gospel Meeting
Present:

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

How to Read the Word of God More Accurately

Thrust statement: **Everyone must strive to read the word of God Accurately.**
Scripture Reading: **2 Timothy 2:15**

> Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[1]

In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermachr originated the idea of the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle philosophy simply means: "Each part of a text must be interpreted with reference to the whole; yet the meaning of the whole cannot be grasped without considering the parts."[2] Interpretation is an attempt to understand the work as a whole by an analysis of its elements.[3] Hermeneutics[4] ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis.[5] Nevertheless, hermeneutics is often used in a much narrower sense to grasp the relevance of ancient works. In other words, it is concerned about the "here" and "now."[6] L. Berkhof makes the following succinct observation:

> The *necessity* of the study of hermeneutics follows from several considerations:
>
> (1) Sin darkened the understanding of man, and still exercises a pernicious influence on his conscious mental life. Therefore, special efforts must be made to guard against error.
> (2) Men differ from one another in many ways that naturally cause them to drift apart mentally. They differ, for instance,
> (a) in intellectual capacity, aesthetic taste, and moral quality resulting in a lack of spiritual affinity:
> (b) in intellectual attainment, some being educated, and others

uneducated; and

(c) in nationality, with a corresponding difference in language, forms of thought, customs, and morals.[7]

Hayes and Holiday define exegesis as an attempt "to reach an informed understanding of the text."[8] It is possible for an interpreter to miss the point of the text if he or she does not consider the "linguistic, cultural, and historical background to the inspired writings," writes Cedric Johnson.[9] It is also in this vein that Berkhof cautions Christians not to fall into the same trap that many fell into during the Reformation. Berkhof again sharpens the focus of caution:

> The militant spirit of the age found expression in hundreds of polemical writings. Each one sought to defend his own opinion with an appeal to Scripture. *Exegesis became the handmaid of dogmatics, and degenerated into a mere search for proof-texts.* The Scriptures were studied in order to find there the truths that were embodied in the Confessions.[10]

To set the tone for this discussion, perhaps it would be helpful to review the experiences of numerous individuals within the Stone/Campbell Restoration Movement. Many within this Movement encounter long-held traditions in his/her quest to understand the Word of God in its context.[11] It is not uncommon for Christians to identify the traditions of their "interpretative community" with the Word itself. Johnson expresses the basic problem well in his discussion of presuppositions:

> Generations of scholars in the field of hermeneutics have recognized the influence of preunderstanding on interpretation. C. S. Lewis observed that "what we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience."[12]

Untold numbers with whom I have discussed the science of exposition have shared their frustrations and have described their Christian journeys as "Gullible's Travels."[13] Christians often accept what they are taught without question. It is in this sense that their interpretation is neither subjective nor objective. In other words, they have never taken the time to employ their minds subjectively in analyzing the Scripture for themselves, nor have they looked at the Scriptures objectively. Their interpretations are "ready-made or prefabricated meanings."[14] Their interpretations are hand-me-downs from their interpretative community. Again, Fish rightly says, "In other words interpretive [15] communities are no more stable than texts because interpretive strategies are not natural or universal, but learned."[16] In spite of Fish's deconstruction philosophy, nevertheless, he is correct when he writes:

> And, moreover, the way of seeing, whatever it was, would never be individual or idiosyncratic, since its source would always be the institutional structure of which the "see-er" was an extending agent. This is what Sacks means when he says that a culture fills brains "so that they are alike in fine detail"; it fills them so that no one's interpretive acts are exclusively his own but fall to him by

> virtue of his position in some socially organized environment and are therefore always shared and public.[17]

Leaders, especially ministers within the Churches of Christ, often memorize verses from the Bible by the hundreds. But their interpretation frequently is not so much theirs, as it is the interpretation of a social structure to which they belong; that is to say, their interpretative community. Traditions still stand in the way of listening anew to the Biblical text.[18] Once more, the Gonzalezs' caution: "We must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to us."[19] It is still very difficult for individuals to conceive that one might cite Scripture and, at the same time, fail to apply the text correctly in light of its historical background.

Some religious writers within the Churches of Christ suppose they have all the answers. And as a result of this kind of intellectualization, the intellectually correct party ostracizes those who go against the grain with their particular interpretative community. To justify condemnation over against the so-called nonconformist, then **Matthew 7: 15** is cited: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

One must be careful that one does not go to the Scriptures to prove what one already believes, but rather to see what they say. Many are so accustomed to reading the Bible as previously taught by generations of interpreters that they cannot distinguish between interpretation and revelation. In other words, for one to question the traditional interpretations is tantamount to questioning the Word of God itself.[20] This failure to discriminate between explanation and divine inspiration is one of the main obstacles that believers encounter in their efforts to liberate the Bible from its culture and to maintain unity among God's people. The heritage of explaining is confused with the text itself. The faith of the fathers becomes the watchword for orthodoxy; the interpretation of the fathers becomes normative and is passed on as authoritative.

One of the most difficult obstacles for any Christian is to approach the text without any strong personal biases. Studying the Bible with colored glasses ultimately leads to distortion of the text.[21] People often tend to give preconceived beliefs the same authority as they give to the Bible. In other words, one's preconceived political power is equal to that of the Scriptures. One's own personal journey of faith, with the ghosts of the past, makes it very difficult for one to view the Scriptures without prejudice. One's prior understanding and interpretation makes it difficult to sift out the truths of God in dealing with the text.[22] The culture of one's heritage controls the text of the Bible. One should never forget that one's own journey occurs within a vast architecture of preunderstanding—no thinking takes place in a vacuum. Frederic W. Farrar draws attention to the religious hatred that generates from this know-it-all attitude:

> My opinions are founded on interpretations of Scripture. Scripture is infallible. My views of its meaning are infallible too. Your opinions and inferences differ from mine; therefore you must be in the wrong. All wrong opinions are capable of so many ramifications that any one who differs from me in minor points must be unsound in vital matters also. Therefore all who differ from me and my clique are "heretics." All heresy is wicked; all heretics are necessarily wicked

men. It is my religious duty to hate, calumniate and abuse you.[23]

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The first step in explaining Scripture is to read the text. To fathom a passage involves the immediate context, the remote context, and the larger context. The *immediate context* includes verses preceding and following the reference that one is studying. On the other hand, the *remote context* may take in the entire book in which the text is found. Also, the *larger context* may embrace the whole of God's written revelation. This understanding of contexts helps to determine the meaning or meanings that one attaches to any distinct phrase. Otherwise, the interpreter may impose conjectured convictions on a text without due reflection upon what the author says. Without a conception of a context, a person's particular context tends to shape his/her understanding and interpretation of the message. Sidney Greidanus is correct when he says, "An interpreter must be careful not to read more into a text than is actually there at that particular stage of redemptive history."[24]

Merely reciting Scriptures that draw attention to certain party dogmas is not sufficient to determine the meaning of the text. Remember that the context is the determining factor in trying to arrive at a correct insight. One must not employ Holy Scripture in a way the Holy Spirit did not employ them. Leroy Garrett points out with justification that

> People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. Revelation is what God has given us in scripture. Interpretation is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.[25]

One may cite **Matthew 7:15**—"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves"—correctly, but not necessarily speak *as* the Bible speaks. One may speak *where* the Bible speaks and not speak *as* the Bible speaks. In order to understand this passage of Scripture, it is necessary to study the whole of Matthew's Gospel before analyzing individual elements.

A BASIC PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION: VIEW OF THE WHOLE VERSUS THE PARTICULAR

As one contemplates a study of the whole of Matthew's Gospel, it is imperative that one examines the full text before an analysis of its parts (for example, **Matthew 7:15**). If a reader explores a specific verse without weighing its sum total, then one's reflection may radically alter a correct view of a particular text. Examples of particularization of texts without contexts to support certain dogmatic presuppositions are rampant among many Christians. We may consider the following isolated Scriptures as examples of frequently cited texts that are misapplied by many sincere Christians to uphold a sectarian spirit that divides the Christian community for which Jesus prayed (**John 17**).

- Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves (**Matthew 7:15**).

- Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (**7:13-14**).[26]

- If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (**5:29-30**).

- But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also (**5:39**).

- Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (**7:1-2**).[27]

It is not uncommon for interpreters to impose their own conceptual grids on a text without due reflection. When one approaches the Word of God, one should approach with a hermeneutics of suspicion. In other words, one should be conscious of his/her own fallibility in interpreting Scriptures. One's interpretation should always remain the object of suspicion and of critical evaluation. Everyone must have a self-critical stance toward the tendency to impose one's own agenda upon the exposition of Scripture. This is especially true in the above Scripture citations (**Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24**).

For many believers, false prophets (**7:15**) are those who disagree with their brand of orthodoxy or interpretation of Scripture. Also, many appeal to the Scripture (**7:13-14**) about the small gate and the narrow road to give credence to their particular denominational stance as the only way to heaven. Some Christians have even taken the self-mutilation language (**5:29-30**) as a call to physical impairment of the body. Among the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement, the turning of the right cheek (**5:39**) is cited as justification for not defending one's country in the time of war.

One cannot necessarily just take the Scriptures at face value without seeking to understand the intent of the author. Everyone is to employ sound methods of interpretation in seeking to unfold the intended meaning of any text. One needs to develop the habit of working with the text in order to hear what the original hearers heard. Hopefully, this study will assist one's understanding of the original setting in order to help remove twentieth century bifocals and journey back into the first century, to stand upon their threshold, to see through their eyes, and to think their thoughts. God's people must seek to read the Bible without colored glasses, which often leads to distortions; one must guard against his/her interpretation as equal to that of Scripture. To accomplish these objectives, it is necessary to learn how to read the Gospel of Matthew.

General Overview of the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew's Gospel is remembered for its Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the Golden Rule. The Gospel of Matthew is cherished for its union of gospel and ethics, of

faith and morality. Matthew's Gospel is concerned to recover the moral and ethical aspects of the Christian life, something that the Old Testament prophets also sought to capture. Matthew speaks against those who set themselves over against the ethical instructions of Jesus. For Matthew, it is not sufficient just to accept Jesus as the Messiah,

but one must obey Him. This is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about—ethical behavior that is pleasing to God.

In fact, Matthew includes the stern warning of Jesus against those who do not obey God: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (**7:21**). Then, Matthew also concludes his Gospel with Jesus' admonition to His apostles to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (**28:19-20**). Thus, Matthew begins and ends the ministry of Jesus with a call to correct conduct.

The Gospel's Structure

This essay has chosen **Matthew 7:15** an example of how to read the word of God more accurately. For one to interpret any Scripture correctly, one should consider the structure of the book before dealing with its parts. This is especially true for a correct interpretation of **Matthew 7:15**. The following structure of Matthew's gospel should assist individuals in their understanding and application of the parts to the Christian community today. Before one adventures into the narrative studies of the three major divisions of Matthew's gospel (**1:1—4:16; 4:17—16:20; 16:21—28:20**), an analysis of the five major discourses in the Gospel of Matthew should help one in the identification of the false prophets of Jesus' time as well as the time of Matthew's writing this Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew appears to be written around five major discourses.

- The Sermon on the Mount (**5:1—8:1**)
- The Charge to the Apostles (**chapter 10**)
- The Parables (chapter 13)
- The Lesson on Forgiveness (**chapter 18**)
- The Judgment and End of Jerusalem (**chapters 24—25**)

Following the five discourses, Matthew gives a transition that concludes each major discourse:

- "When Jesus had finished saying these things" (**7:28**)
- "After Jesus had finished instructing" (**11:1**)
- "When Jesus had finished these parables" (**13:53**)

- "When Jesus had finished saying these things" (**19:1**)

- "When Jesus had finished saying all these things" (**26:1**)

Matthew's Gospel can further be divided into ten sections in which "doing" and "teaching" alternate.

NARRATIVE	TEACHING	TRANSITION
1—4	**5—7**	**7:28**
8:1—9:34	**9:35—10:42**	**11:1**
11:2—12:50	**13:1—52**	**13:53**
13:53—17:27	**18:1—35**	**19:1**
19:1—23:39	**24:1—25:46**	**26:1**
26:1—28:20 **Passion Week**		

Matthew portrays Jesus as *doer* and *teacher*. He records at least twenty miracles and six major messages. Approximately sixty percent of Matthew's Gospel focuses on the teachings of Jesus. It is also significant that he arranges his material in a topical, rather than a chronological order. For instance, he groups ten miracles together in **chapters 8—9**. The above outline helps one to look at the discourses in context in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the conflict that existed between Jesus and the Pharisees.

CONCLUSION

This article has sought to make interpreters conscious of how prior understanding can affect one's current understanding of Scripture. All Christians who open God's Word and read it bring with them the forestructures of their lives formed by their history, their language, and their culture in which they live, therefore it is imperative upon every reader to capture the original intent of the author. Since no one can approach the text without presuppositions, then one must exercise every safeguard to interpret the Word of God correctly.

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[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 60.

[2] Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, "Hermeneutics," *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1991), 97. This essay applies the hermeneutic circle in order to identify the false prophets in the Gospel of Matthew.

[3] Ibid.

[4] See Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 17, where Stein writes: "The term 'hermeneutics,' . . .

. simply describes the practice or discipline of interpretation; Thomas H. Olbright, *Hearing God's Voice* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1996), 185, where he says, "In a large sense, hermeneutics constitutes a theory about how one person explains or communicates a text to another."

[5] See Morner and Rausch, "Exegesis," Ibid., 72,73, where they say, "Originally, the detailed analysis, explanation, and INTERPRETATION of passages in the Bible, or, by extension, of any literary or intellectual text. The term carries with it a sense of digging out the meaning of a difficult passage."

[6] See Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 25.

[7] L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), 12.

[8] John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook, Revised Edition (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1987), 23..*

[9] Cedric B. Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 20. See Appendix V, Dallas Burdette, "Passover Traditions in the First Century," for an example of the application of the above principles—"linguistic, cultural, and historical background."

[10] Berkhof, *Interpretation*, 28-29.

[11] See Hayes and Holladay, *Exegesis*, 66, where they write:

> The best guide to the meaning of a word is the context in which it is used. This means, first of all, the immediate context of the passage in which it occurs. If a word has several meanings, one should explore the range of meanings and see how they fit or do not fit in the context. A broader context is the whole of the document in which the terms appear. One should explore how a term is used and what it denotes elsewhere in the document.

[12] Johnson, *Interpretation*, 45.

[13] See Dallas Burdette, "My Pilgrimage of Faith," in which I develop the evolution of my thinking in my Christian journey. This article is informative in that I discuss basic principles of how to interpret. This essay discusses many of the "pit falls" that I encountered on my spiritual journey as a boy preacher. To a great extent, my earlier spiritual journey could be described as "Gullible's Travels" [ON-LINE]. Available from www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 28 April 2000] located under BIBLICAL STUDIES.

[14] Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 172.

[15] Fish does not use "interpretative community" but "interpretive community."

[16] Ibid. I disagree with Fish's philosophy of the text being unstable. If I understand Fish correctly, he is a deconstructionist in his philosophy. See Morner and Rausch, "Deconstructive Criticism," *NTC's Dictionary*, 50-51, where they explain "deconstruction":

> An approach to LITERARY CRITICISM based on the views and procedures of the French thinker Jacques Derrida. Deconstructive criticism utilizes reader-centered theories of meaning that ignore reference to the author's intention and deny the possibility of a terminate meaning or "correct" interpretation for any text. Deconstructive criticism makes possible innumerable contradictory but "undecidable" meanings. First becoming prominent in the 1970s, deconstructive criticism is central to POST-STRUCTURALISM.

[17] Ibid., 335.

[18] See Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 48-68.

[19] Ibid., 31.

[20] For an insightful article on the differentiation between Revelation and interpretation, see Leroy Garrett, "It Means What It Says," *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975) : 68-71.

[21] See Johnson, *Interpretation* , 42, where he captures, in concise language, the subjective biases of all interpreters:

> My contention is that conflicting theological positions are in part due to the fact that we all approach a text, sacred or secular, with our strong subjective biases. Even though we have a commitment to read the Bible on its own terms: and even though we want the Divine and human authors to speak for themselves, somehow we still come up with contradictory views on some issues.

[22] For an excellent presentation of this concept, see Gonzalez and Gonzalez, "Difficulties in Hearing the Text," in *Preaching*, 29-47.

[23] Frederick W. Farrar, "Religious Hatred," quoted in Carl Ketcherside, *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 6 (June 1965): 92.

[24] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 71.

[25] Garrett, "It Means What It Says," 69.

[26] See Dallas Burdette, "The Narrow Gate" for a contextual study of **Matthew**

7:13-14 [ON-LINE]. Available from www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 28 April 2000], located under caption BIBLICAL STUDIES.

[27] See Dallas Burdette, "Judge Not" for a contextual study of **Matthew 7:1-2** [ON-LINE]. Available from www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 28 April 2000], located under caption BIBLICAL STUDIES.

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The Authority of the Old Testament

Dallas Burdette January 15, 1999

Thrust statement: The Old Testament reveals the will of God for ethical behavior.

Scripture Reading: **Matthew 5:17-19; 2 Timothy 2:15**

What relevance does the Old Testament have within the Christian community? Is the Old Testament an antiquated book that is no longer relevant to Christians? Is it necessary for believers to study the Old Testament, as did the early church? Did the American Restoration Movement initiated by the Campbells reject the Old Testament? If so, when? What is your attitude toward the Old Testament? The most crucial question one must consider in seeking a proper decision to this interrogation is: "What did the men who wrote the New Testament think about the Old Testament?"

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

The question among evangelicals is not whether or not the Old Testament is inspired, but does the Old Testament have any significance for believers today? Before considering the attitudes of the apostles and other inspired men, how do we account for such a wholesale abandonment of the Old Testament within the Churches of Christ? Perhaps, a brief note of Alexander Campbell's beliefs on this subject will help to set the tone for our discussion. For example, the attitudes of those in the Stone/Campbell Movement were influenced by a sermon preached by Alexander Campbell on the law. It is this sermon that set the stage for the negative attitude within many Churches of Christ. Everett Ferguson commented upon the significance of this sermon in an address to the Christian Conference, Abilene University, July 1982:

> Alexander Campbell's "Sermon on the Law" has been generally regarded by the historians

as a significant episode in the emergence of the Restoration Movement.[1]

Even Campbell credited this sermon to the beginning of the American Restoration Movement. As a result of this message on the law, the Campbell Restoration Movement was launched. He attributed an eminent significance for his own participation in the Movement to this sermon. The following extract from Campbell may explain the significance of this speech:

> Although precisely thirty years this month since I delivered it, and some two or three years after my union with the Baptist denomination, the intelligent reader will discover in it the elements of things which have characterized all our writings on the subject of modern Christianity from that day to the present. . . . This unfortunate sermon afterward involved me in a seven years' war with some members of said Association, and became a matter of much debate. I found at least, however, that there was a principle at work in the plotters of said crusade, which Stephen assigns as the cause of the misfortunes of Joseph. It is, therefore, highly probable to my mind, that but for the persecution begun on the alleged heresy of this sermon, whether the present reformation had ever been advocated by me.[2]

Campbell stressed that he did not recognize the division of the law into the three classifications, that is, (1) moral, (2) ceremonial, and (3) judicial. Since he did not recognize these three categorizations, he drew a sharp distinction between the so-called old and new covenants, that is to say, a distinction between the Old Testament books and the New Testament books. Alexander was not alone in this decision. His father also stressed this difference in 1809 in his ***Declaration and Address.*** Thomas Campbell uses the following pregnant words to express this distinction:

> That although the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the Church, and therefore in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the new Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, and the particular duties of its members.[3]

As a result of their philosophy, they set the tone for the neglect of the Old Testament books. It appears that this neglect for the Old Testament, at least in the Stone/Campbell Restoration Movement, may be due in part to the "Sermon on the Law" and the ***Declaration and Address***. Thus, as a result of this emphasis, this concept became a focal point in the theology of the Movement. Part of their theology rests, so it seems, in not properly understanding the negative statements in the writings of Paul that grew out of the "new covenant" that God created through His Son Jesus Christ. Ferguson also expresses the central focus of Campbell's position on the law in his use of Romans and Galatians:

> Campbell in the "Sermon on the Law" works only with Paul, primarily Romans (from which he took his text) and secondarily Galatians and 2 Corinthians. He could have appealed also to Hebrews. One must remember that Paul had a special problem in mind, namely, Judaizers who were binding parts of the law of Moses on Gentile Christians as conditions of salvation, and, in applying Paul's teaching, this context must be kept in mind. [4]

It appears that Alexander Campbell did not consider the negative aspects of the law in light of the

Jewish controversy. How is one to interpret disapproving announcements about the law? Does opposing testimony about the law disannul the validity of the law for believers? Was Campbell correct in asserting that there is no distinction among the three classifications of the law, namely, ceremonial, moral, and civil? Did Campbell examine carefully the positive statements about the law in the Gospel of Matthew? Some of Campbell's arguments are sufficiently fragile that one is reluctant to let too much rest upon them. Ferguson is perfectly right when he writes, "Campbell does not in the Sermon deal with the rather different estimate of the law to be found in Matthew.[5]

NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Christians are confronted with two issues concerning the relevance of the Old Testament: (1) Does the Old Testament have authority for Christians? and (2) How does one apply the Old Testament to the Christian community? The most common understanding about the Old Testament is that Christ nailed it to the cross. In other words, He annulled or abrogated the law—period. Thus, many saints do not read the Old Testament writings. Many Christians have adopted the position of Adolf Harnack (1851-1930):

> To reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake the church rightly resisted; to retain it in the sixteenth century was a fate from which the Reformation could not escape; but still to preserve it in the nineteenth century as one of the canonical documents of Protestantism is the result of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis.[6]

Harnack's solution was summarily to reject the Old Testament. Even though Christians would not express their disapprobation of the Old Testament with his phraseology, nevertheless, it amounts to practically the same view. But these views were not unique with Harnack. In fact, in the second century, Marcion (c. 160) also rejected entirely the Old Testament from his Bible.[7] Marcion concluded that the God of the Old Testament could not be the God of the New.

One finds difficulty in squaring Marcion's view with the facts. For instance, over three-fourths of the total Bible is found in the Old Testament. This point alone is sufficient ground to cause one to pause before rejecting this most extensive record of God's revelation. Everett Ferguson aptly remarks:

> According to one count, there are 239 acknowledged quotations of the OT, introduced by some kind of formula, in the NT; there are 198 quotations not introduced by any formula; there are 1,167 instances of OT passages reworded or directly mentioned. This makes a total of 1,604 NT citations of 1,276 different OT passages. There are many allusions to the OT and borrowings of its phrases. Most of these passages represent a straightforward, literary use of the OT. The NT uses the old in many ways; for vocabulary and phraseology to express its own ideas, for illustration, for proof of its statements, for moral instruction, for predictions of the new situation. Each of these and other uses could be discussed, but suffice it to say that problems in the NT use of the Old should not obscure the tremendous indebtedness of the later canon to the older, nor should they make that entire usage more problematic than it is.[8]

Beginning with the New Testament, the permanent value of the Old Testament is repeatedly affirmed with explicit statements about its importance. For example, consider the words of Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount:

> Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the

> smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 5:17-20**).

Again, Paul sets forth the validity of the Old Testament in his epistle to the Romans:

> For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (**Romans 15:4**).

Once more, Paul zeros in on the legitimacy of the Old Testament in his letter to the Corinthians:

> These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come (**1 Corinthians 10:11**).

Or, consider Paul's admonition to Timothy:

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (**2 Timothy 3:14-17**).

These Scripture citations are passages that many Christians have not come to grips with. What does it mean to say, "whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (**Matthew 5:19**)? How can the sacred writings be useful "for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (**1 Timothy 3:16**)? How can Jesus and Paul say these things if the Old Testament is no longer relevant? Again, it is significant that when Paul wrote these words to Timothy, he had reference to the Old Testament. What did Paul mean when he encouraged Timothy to "continue in what you have learned" (**2 Timothy 3:14**)? The inclusion or exclusion of the Old Testament affects every area of theology.

The author of Hebrews specifically wrote that the unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament were to be found in the same God, despite the later arguments of Marcion:

> In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe (**Hebrews 1:1-2**).

Believers during the Old Testament and New Testament eras shared the one and only God.

MORAL, CEREMONIAL, CIVIL

Part of the problem, so it seems to me, is a failure to consider the various aspects of the law. This distinction is not generally advocated within the Churches of Christ. Why is this so? An answer to the problem lies partly in Alexander Campbell's position. Campbell did not make a distinction between the

various aspects of the law. But was he correct? Are the arguments for moral, ceremonial, or civil legitimate? Walter Kaiser very succinctly states this problem:

> It must be conceded that the OT contains parts that were indeed temporary and, therefore, time-bound by their very nature (e.g., the ceremonial and ritualistic laws and the once-for-all aspects of its historic episodes). But our contention is that there was also built-in warning with each of these temporary parts that alerted us to the fact that they would become obsolete. Accordingly, all the tabernacle instructions were given as a model, or "pattern" (Exod 25:9, 40; Heb 8:5), of the real, which remained separate from the ceremonial institutions themselves. Nevertheless, behind the temporal and historical lay a principle—a truth meant to outlive its temporal or historical illustration. Too frequently the church has incorrectly assumed that when it had seen the collapse of the temporal institution, it had also thereby witnessed the end of all truth or obligation to any undergirding principles that the institution or historical event illustrated for a former age.[9]

Perusals of the Old Testament Scriptures indicate the temporal nature of certain aspects, but, on the other hand, it is obvious that certain elements have abiding validity. The Scriptures must give its own signals in distinguishing what is temporal, cultural, and historically conditioned. Is the moral law of God temporal, cultural, or historically conditioned? How does one explain the many references in the New Testament to the Old Testament that speaks of the abiding force of the law? How does one account for the eternal righteousness of the law in the messianic age? For example, both Jeremiah and Isaiah speak of the abiding importance of the law in the Christian age. If this is not the situation, then one wonders what Isaiah and Jeremiah refer to when they spoke of "the law" going forth from Jerusalem and "the law" being written upon the heart? Isaiah tells Israel that

> In the last days
>
> the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established
> as chief among the mountains;
> it will be raised above the hills,
> and all nations will stream to it.
> Many peoples will come and say,
>
> "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
> to the house of the God of Jacob.
> He will teach us his ways,
> so that we may walk in his paths."
>
> The law will go out from Zion,
> the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Again, Jeremiah also speaks of the law written on the hearts of God's people in the messianic age:

> "The time is coming," declares the LORD,
> "when I will make a new covenant
> with the house of Israel
> and with the house of Judah.
> It will not be like the covenant
> I made with their forefathers

when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,"
declares the LORD.

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time," declares the LORD.
"**I will put my law in their minds**
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people (**Jeremiah 31:31-33**).

Both of these citations are Messianic in tone. How does one reconcile these Scriptures with the current interpretation that the "law was nailed to the cross"? Is it possible that Christians have misread the statements of Paul in his letters to the Ephesians (**2:15-16**) and Colossians (**2:13-15**), which seem to indicate, at least on surface reading, that the law was nailed to the cross?

Ephesians 2:15-16	**Colossians 2:13-15**
For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh **the law with its commandments and regulations**. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.	When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, **the law with its commandments and regulations**, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

What does Paul teach by saying, "the law with its commandments and regulations"? What does Paul mean by announcing, "the law with its commandments and regulations" to the Colossians? One must be careful not to bring his theological heritage, his ecclesiastical traditions, his cultural norms, or his existential concerns to the Epistles as he or she reads them. If one's interpretation of these two Scripture citations make the text mean something God did not intend, then one is abusing the texts. Remember that the text serves as a window through which one can glance into a historical period. The following extract from Greg Bahnsen may explain these two Scripture citations (**Ephesians 2:15-16** and **Colossians 2:13-15**) more clearly:

> The ceremonial observations no longer apply, but their meaning and intention have been eternally validated. The earlier sacrificial ritual was a foreshadow pointing to Christ (Heb. 10:1), and no repetition of a mere shadow can amount to the substantial reality! That which is the foundation of the new economy, in which the outward performance of the ceremonial ritual is not observed, is the obedience of Christ (cf. Heb. 10:8 f.). His obedience makes it no longer necessary for us to obey the ceremonial law in the way which the saints living in the period of expectation did. Ephesians 2:14-16 says that Christ has put the principle of commandments contained in ordinances "out of gear." Christ has broken down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles of which the dividing wall in the temple was the symbol. It

should be quite clear that the law which represents enmity and separation between Jews and Gentiles is the ceremonial law, for the moral law does not distinguish between these groups (all men are responsible to the moral law and are condemned under it: Rom. 1-3). It is this ceremonial system which Christ has made ineffective.[10]

In seeking to draw attention to neglected truths, repetition is unavoidable. It is a popular error to suppose that "commandments contained in ordinances" refers to the law as a whole. But it seems that the stipulations that Paul addresses has to do with "the law of commandments contained in ordinances," that is to say, the principle, order, policy, or system of commandments, not the moral law of God. In other words, the "commandments contained in ordinances" are "decrees," thus, referring to the ceremonial law. Even in **Colossians 2:14**, the "ordinances" are the "shadow of things to come" (**2:17**), and in **verses 11** and **16** specific ceremonial illustrations are given.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The Sermon on the Mount is quoted by many Christians to substantiate the abandonment of the Old Testament. Part of the confusion lies within the phrases, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago" (**Matthew 5:21**) and "But I tell you" (**Matthew 5:22**). The Greek text is: `jHkouvsate o {ti ejrrevqh toi`" ajrcaivoi":`[11] ("You heard that it was said to the ancients") [Mathew 5:21], and `ejgw; de; levgw uJmi`n`[12] ("But I say to you") [**Matthew 5:22**]. The phrase, "You heard that it was said to the ancients" is not what the law said, but rather, the interpretations placed upon the law by its religious leaders. Jesus sought to correct the erroneous explanations piled upon the law through the tradition of the elders; He did this by calling attention with the phrase, "But I say to you."

To illustrate the above statement, a cursory look into Jesus' temptation by Satan should clarify the distinction. For example, in the preceding chapter (**Matthew 4**), Jesus' confrontation with Satan resulted in His quoting the Old Testament. Observe that Jesus, in His response to Satan, did not say, "You heard that it was said to the ancients," but rather, "It is written" (`gevgraptai`) [**Matthew 4:4**]. On the one hand, the first statement (**Matthew 5:21**) refers to the forefathers, but, on the other hand, the second statement (**Matthew 4:4**) refers to the *written revelation* of God through the prophets.

One must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down from generation to generation. Above all, never make a decision on what you would like the passage to say. Seek to be faithful to the way in which the Holy Spirit structured the original text. Only through a careful reading of the text itself can one understand the original meaning of the text without reading into it one's own ideas drawn from the present. Proof-texting has no place in exegesis. Verses are only a part of a larger context. The Scriptures in Ephesians and Colossians must be interpreted in light of the larger context, that is, the whole of God's revelation. For example, the preceding Scriptures must be interpreted in light of the Sermon on the Mount.

A brief analysis of certain aspects of the Sermon on the Mount will help to shed light on Jesus' viewpoint concerning the validity or worthlessness of the law. Did Jesus uphold the law or repudiate the law? Did Jesus abolish the Law of Moses and give another law that is more demanding than Moses' law? What can one learn from the Sermon on the Mount concerning Jesus' position toward the law? Does this Sermon invalidate the law?

As one approaches the Sermon on the Mount, one must decide, based upon the context, whether or not Jesus gave a new law or simply explained the original intent of His law as it was revealed to Moses. A

lot will depend upon the application that one attaches to the words, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago," and "But I tell you." Was there a contrast between Moses and Jesus' teaching? Perhaps John R. W. Stott cogently expresses this best:

> It is widely supposed that Jesus was now inaugurating a new law, and that in doing so he was contradicting and repudiating the old. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the suggestion that he should do this is antecedently so improbable as to be impossible. Not only would this run counter to His lifelong attitude of reverent assent to Scripture, but He had just asserted that he had not 'come to abolish the law and the prophets . . . but to fulfill them' (v. 17). . . . No. What Jesus was contradicting here was not Scripture but tradition, not what 'is written' but what 'was said,' not God's word but the false interpretations of it of which the scribes and Pharisees were guilty.[13]

Christ was evaluating not the Older Testamental law, but rather the pharisaical interpretations placed upon the law. Jesus affirmed the solemn authority that not even the least commandment of the entire Old Testament was to be taught as without binding validity today:

> Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (**Matthew 5:19**).

Surely, after such a strong declaration, Jesus would not immediately proceed to loosen a commandment of God's law with "You heard," but "I say" (**Matthew 5:21-48**). For Jesus, "Scripture cannot be broken" (**John 10:35**). Accordingly, Jesus reaffirmed elements of the Decalogue in His response to the rich young man: '"Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself'" (**Matthew 19:18-19**).

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, speaks of the abiding validity of the law: "Do not think that I have come to abolish (`katalu`sai) the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (**Matthew 5:17**). Did Jesus give us a New Torah, as suggested by many, and abolish the Old? Is it possible that an individual's prejudice is so deep-seated that one-sidedness negates the possibility of understanding this text? One seldom ask what this text means; rather, one wants to know how to answer his opponent. Have Christians, in general, approached the Bible to prove what they already believe rather than observe what it teaches? These are questions that everyone must consider in order to be honest with himself or herself.

Not to abolish but to fulfill

Another stumbling block to many believers is the infinitive phrase, "to fulfill" (`plhrw`sai). This group of words is an enigma to many believers. Just what is meant by the infinitive utterance, "to fulfill them" (**Matthew 5:17**)? Also, how should one interpret Christ's statement: "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (`gevnhtai, "might become") [**Matthew 5:18**]. The NIV uses "fulfilled" (`plhrw`sai) in **verse 17**, but "accomplished" (`gevnhtai) in **verse 18**. On the other hand, the KJV employs "fulfilled" in both verses, but is the meaning the same?

Matthew uses two different Greek words for our English word "fulfill" in the KJV. The current interpretation attached to the word "fulfill" is generally understood in the sense of "relaxation" or "invalidation." But is this interpretation correct? Greg Bahnsen seems to have shown conclusively that

the Greek words convey distinct meanings:

> The explicit and emphatic affirmation of the law's authority does not allow one to take "fulfillment" in verse 17 as any sort of euphemism for "relaxation" or "invalidation." At the same time in which God promised a new covenant He indicated that, far from being different from the first covenant, the ethical stipulations of that new covenant would be the same as the original law; God says he will write the law on His people's hearts, not change the law.[14]

Jesus says He came to "fulfill" (`plhrw`sai`), not "to abolish" (`katalu`sai`). Failure to distinguish between the two words ("fulfill" and "accomplish") employed by the Holy Spirit can lead to an erroneous understanding of the Sermon on the Mount. Ignorance of these words can lend an air of plausibility to one's interpretation. Just what does this aorist infinitive mean ("to fulfill," `plhrw`sai`)? For example, does it indicate that Jesus put an end to,[15] replaces[16], supplements,[17] to actively obey, [18]or enforcing or confirming?[19] The most detailed study of this infinitive phrase is that of Bahnsen. He draws attention to this ("enforcing," or "confirming") neglected aspect of "to fulfill":

> The establishment of God's will as the work of Christ plays an important part in Matthew's Christology; accordingly, Matthew Henry writes that the gospel is not the repeal of the law, but its reestablishment. Jesus says in Matthew 5:17 that he came to confirm and restore the full measure, intent, and purpose of the Older Testamental law. He sees the process of revelation deposited in the Older Testament as finding its validation in Him—its actual embodiment (cf. John 1:17). Jesus' own teaching represents a proclamation of the full implications of the commandments God delivered in the Older Testament in opposition to the legalistic scribal interpretations; His teaching demonstrates that God's law is more exacting and comprehensive than the current shallow and externalistic interpretations would lead people to think. *Pleerroo* should be taken to mean "confirm and restore in full measure." We must not think that the coming of Christ has invalidated the previous law of God, for the "word of the Lord abides forever" (1 Pet. 1:24-25).[20]

One's understanding of the Sermon on the mount plays a central role in one's application of the Old Testament to the Christian era. What is the central focus of Jesus in His Sermon? Is He propounding a "new law," or is He refuting the traditions of the Pharisees and teachers of the law (scribes)? The context seems to indicate that Jesus addresses the nullifying attitude of the religious leaders toward the law, not the law itself. In other words, the leaders of Israel were making the Word of God ineffective through their traditions. In this Sermon, Jesus makes it clear that the model for Christian obedience to God's law is not Pharisaical legalism, but obedience from the heart.[21]

The religious leaders' behavior excludes one from the kingdom of heaven: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (**Matthew 5:20**). To illustrate the forcefulness of Jesus' teaching about *inward* righteousness versus *outward* righteousness, it will be helpful to reflect upon Jeremiah's graphic portrait of Israel's reliance upon the "temple of the Lord" in contradistinction to proper conduct, which behavior Jesus also addresses in His Sermon on the Mount.

> This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the

alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. "'Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD (**Jeremiah 7:3-11**).

This same attitude toward God's law is also reflected in the writings of Isaiah. Listen to God as He addresses the leaders in Israel for their lack of concern for the things that really matter:

'Why have we fasted,' they say,
'and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?'
"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?
6 "**Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen**:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (**Isaiah 58:3-7**).

Many of the religious leaders, in Jesus' day, reflected the same mind-set that existed in Israel. Their religion consisted in *outward* rituals, but not with *inward* righteousness. The words of Isaiah are very similar to the words of Jesus in His renunciation of the religious leaders in His judgment scene (**Matthew 25:31-46**). This parable of Jesus is an analysis of those condemned in **Matthew 23** (seven woes against the leaders of Israel). In the Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus concludes the true interpretation of God's law against the traditions of men, He warns His disciples with very vivid language about the ethical behavior of the teachers of the law and Pharisees:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from

> thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (**Matthew 7:15-21**).

Why must one practice *inward* as well as *outward* righteousness and teach the details of God's law? Is it not because one's righteousness (good works) must include the whole man? Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (**Matthew 22:37**). In other words, the righteousness of the believer must exceed the *external* righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. What is Jesus' concern? Is it not about law abuse? Is it not about neglect of the true intent of the law? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus goes to the very heart of the matter. In other words, Jesus repudiates the perverse externalistic interpretations of the Pharisees and their exegetical distortions of the law. Not only were the Pharisees mistaken in this area of the law, but they were also incorrect in their scheme of justification; the religious leaders sought salvation through works. To state more clearly, the religious leaders not only invalidated the intent of the law by their disregard for the inward, but they also used the law as their means of right standing before God.

The Sermon on the Mount zeroes in on the *external* versus the *internal* intent of the law. For example, this famous Sermon is rounded off, as stated above, with an earnest appeal to beware of false prophets and a petition to put into practice His teachings. The first truth that our Lord Jesus Christ drives home in this Sermon is the authority of the Old Testament (**Matthew 5:17-19**). Again, in concluding this Sermon, Jesus sums of the essence of the Law with what is now commonly called the "Golden Rule": "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (**Matthew 7:12**).

PAUL'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW

As one contemplates the writings of Paul, one should be conscious that the Holy Spirit used Paul as an instrument to communicate His truths. There can be no contradiction between Paul and other statements of Holy Scripture. It appears, at least on surface reading, that Paul's negative statements about law depreciate its authority in the life of the believer. For many believers, Paul's diversified "point of view" toward the law is one of the most baffling enigmas in biblical studies. At the very center of this problem is a statement of Paul to Christians in Rome: "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (**Romans 10:4**). How does one harmonize this statement of Paul with the statement of Jesus in His Sermon (**Matthew 5:17-19**)? Heikki Raisanen captures this dichotomy of Paul's theology this way:

> Paul has two sets of statements concerning the validity of the law for Christians. According to one set the law has been abrogated once and for all. According to the other the law is still in force, and what it requires is charismatically fulfilled by Christians.[22]

Paul's objection to the law must be seen in its illegal use, that is to say, the use of the law as a means of justification, not in its proper use, that is to say, the law as an expression of God's will for humanity. For Paul, the law is always explicitly the "law of God." Thus, Paul could express his delight in the law: "For in my inner being I delight in God's law" (**Romans 7:22**). Again, Paul expresses his abiding status to

the law in its relationship to his way of life: "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin" (**Romans 7:25**). The one who does not submit himself or herself to God's law is hostile to God: "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (**Romans 8:7**). Again, Paul speaks of the abiding validity of the law as the thing that really counts: "circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts" (**1 Corinthians 7:19**). From these Scriptures, once can see at a glance that Paul delights in God's law, serves the law of God in his mind, and subjects himself to the law of God.

One writer explains one's subjection to the law in these terms: "The nature of the Law is summed up in the statement that the Law is the good will of God. Hence not to be subject to the Law is enmity against God, R. 8:7."[23] Also, Paul's comments to the Corinthians is quite revealing: "To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law" **(1 Corinthians 9:21)**. Is one "under law"? Or is one "subject to law"? If one is under law, then, one is still under condemnation. But what did Paul mean by his statement in **1 Corinthians 9:21**? In **verse 20** of this same chapter, Paul stresses that the Christian is not under law, but in **verse 21**, Paul appears to contradict what he had just stated. How does one respond properly to this apparent contradiction between the two verses? Perhaps, a parallel chart from the English and Greek text will clarify part of the dilemma:

1 Corinthians 9:20	**1 Corinthians 9:21**
To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those **under the law** I became like one **under the law** (though I myself **am not under the law**), so as to win those **under the law.**	To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am **under Christ's law**), so as to win those not having the law.
kai; ejgenovmhn toi`" jIoudaivoi" wJ" jIoudai`o", i{na jIoudaivou" kerdhvsw: toi`" **uJpo; novmon** wJ" **uJpo; novmon,** mh; w]n aujto;" **uJpo; novmon,** i{na tou;" **uJpo; novmon** kerdhvsw:	toi`" ajnovmoi" wJ" a[nomo", mh; w]n a[nomo" qeou` ajllÆ **e[nnomo"** Cristou`, i{na kerdavnw tou;" ajnovmou"

In **1 Corinthians 9:20**, Paul says "under law" (**uJpo; novmon**) four times; on the other hand, in **1 Corinthians 9:21**, Paul does not employ "under law" (**uJpo; novmon**), but rather, "subject to law" (**e[nnomo"**). In the chart above, "under law" is highlighted in both Greek and English text, and, also in **1 Corinthians 9:21**, "under law" is highlighted in both Greek and English text. Paul forcefully states that he is "not under law" (**v. 20**). If this is so, and it is, one wonders why he would say that he was "under Christ's law" in the next verse (**v. 21**). In **verse 21**, Paul does not write "under law" (**uJpo; novmon**), but "subject to Christ's law" (**e[nnomo"`**). No Christian is "under law," but every Christian is "subject to law" under Christ or "within law to Christ." Again, Paul says, "I am not free from God's law" (a[nomo" qeou`) but "within law to Christ" (**e[nnomo"** Cristou).[24] There is no contradiction between these two verses. Did Paul ever consider himself without law to God?

Paul's negative statements about law concern the use of the law as a means of justification, that is to say, an illegal use of the law. Whenever one resorts to the law (any law for that matter—old or new) to justify one's standing before God, then, one is using the law in a way that God never intended. Paul calls

attention to a righteousness that is from God through faith, not law: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (**Romans 3:21-22**). The religious leaders of Israel were seeking righteousness by law rather than by faith. Thus, Paul nails the coffin shut, as it were, for those who rely upon law as the means of justification: "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (**Romans 3:20**). It is in this vein that John Murray explains:

> The person who is 'under law' in the sense of Rom. vi. 14 is in bondage to sin in its guilt, defilement, and power. But this was not the consequence of being under the Mosaic economy during the period from Moses to Christ. Nor is 'under law', in this sense, to be confused with a similar term as it applies to a believer in Christ (1 Cor. Ix. 21). Of the same force as 'under law', in this depreciatory sense is the expression 'of law' (Rom. Iv. 14; Gal. 3.18, iii.16, iii. 2,5,10) refers to the same notion. 'apart from works of law' (Rom. Iii.21), he means a righteousness apart from works of law and therefore antithetical to a works-righteousness. When he says that we have been put to death to the law and discharged from the law (Rom. Vii.4, 6), he refers to the breaking of that bond that binds us to the law as the way of acceptance with God (cf. Also Gal. Ii.9). Law as law, as commandment requiring obedience and pronouncing its curse upon all transgression, does not have any potency or provision for the justification of the ungodly. The contrast between law-righteousness, which is our own righteousness, and the righteousness of God provided in Christ is the contrast between human merit and the gospel of grace (cf. Rom. X.3; Gal. Ii.21, v. 4; Phil. Iii.9). Paul's polemic in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians is concerned with that antithesis.[25]

Even though justification is by faith in Jesus, nevertheless, Paul submits the following question to cause reflection upon the law's relevancy in the life of every believer: "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law" (**Romans 3:31**). The written law is an expression of God's righteousness. Again, Paul reinforces this truth when he writes: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law" (**Romans 13:8**). In other words, Paul is saying that love expresses itself in obedience to the commandments. Immediately upon his explanation that love is the fulfillment of the law, he pens:

> The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (**Romans 13:9-10**).

JAMES' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW

Just a perusal of the book of James reveals the relevancy of the law in one's life. No New Testament writer is more zealous for the fruits that accompany faith than James, our Lord's brother. In fact, James speaks of the law as "the perfect law that gives freedom" (**James 1:25**). According to James, every believer who continues to look "intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does (**James 1:25**). Not only does James call the law "the perfect law," but he also speaks of it as the "royal law" (**James 2:8**). Is James talking about the law itself? Listen to James as he explains his "royal law":

> If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker (**James 2:8-11**).

Again, James calls attention to the teaching that the law also judges one's relationship to his brother: "Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it (**James 4:11**). Why such reliance upon the law? Does James' dependence upon the law reflect the words of Jesus—his Lord and brother in the flesh (**Matthew 5:17-20**)? Again, why such admonitions? Is it not that the believer is to be holy in his or her manner of life? The law reflects the character of God. It is for this reason that Paul writes, "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (**Romans 7:12**).

PETER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW

Peter also echoes upon the character of God in the Old Testament and appeals to the Old Testament writings for right behavior: "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written (`gevgraptai`): "Be holy, because I am holy" (**1 Peter 1:15-16**). This citation is taken from **Leviticus**: "The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy (**19:2**). It is also significant that the Hebrew writer concludes his epistle with a reference to the Old Testament:

> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (**Hebrews 13:4-6**).

This writer (Hebrews) cites two Old Testament passages (**Joshua 1:5** and **Psalms 118:6**) to illustrate the presence and help of God. Every Christian must be free from the love of money and be content with what he or she has. The believer needs nothing more because he or she always has the presence and help of God. Consider the following chart of the above two Scriptures:

Joshua 1:5	**Psalms 118:6**
No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.	The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

JOHN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW

For one to be relieved of the demands of the law would contradict one's relationship to God, which grace establishes. Salvation is freedom from sin, not freedom to commit sin. The Christian has respect and love for God's law. He is now a servant of righteousness; he is no longer a servant of sin; he is

concerned about God's law. John puts it this way: "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (**1 John 3:4**). Again, John goes right to the heart of commandment keeping:

> The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did (**1 John 2:4-6**).

CONCLUSION

The principle concern of this essay is to set forth a brief summary of the various views advocated toward the relevancy of the Old Testament. Many scholars deny the law any significance since we are under grace, not under law. On the other hand, one finds an equal number of scholars who appeal to the Old Testament as authoritative. Generally, the negative arguments are based upon negative statements of Paul—statements not viewed in context. It appears that expositors who repudiate the Old Testament fail to understand the emphasis of Paul in refuting the Judaizers' use of the Law as a means of right standing before God. One must never use the law as a means of justification. On the other hand, one should employ the law to assist him or her in progressive sanctification, that is to say, holiness in one's walk with God. A perusal of the teachings of Jesus, Paul, James, Peter, and John advance the weight of the Old Testament for the believer.

Again, in conclusion, it is worthy of note to call attention to the negative statements about the law in the Pauline epistles. Paul's negative statements do not relate to the authority of the Old Testament, but rather, to justification. Man, says Paul, cannot be justified by law:

> Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:19-26**).

God is the one who justifies; law can never justify. The law shuts every man's mouth: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (**Romans 3:19-20**). When one is in Jesus Messiah, then one can say with assurance: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies" (**Romans 8:33**). Paul reinforces this thought with the statement: "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (**Romans 10:4**). Christians are dead to the law, but the law is not dead. Even though Paul painted a rather dismal picture of those under law, nevertheless, he spoke of a righteousness that is by faith, not law: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all

who believe" (**Romans 3:21-22**). Remember the final words of Paul to Timothy about the Old Testament:

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (**2 Timothy 3:14-17**).

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ENDNOTES

[1] Everett Ferguson, "Alexander Campbell's `Sermon on the Law,' A Historical and Theological Examination," ***Restoration Quarterly*** 29 (second quarter 1987: 71.
[2] Alexander Campbell, "Sermon on the Law," ***Millennial Harbinger 3 (September 1846): 493.***
[3] See C. S. Young, ***Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*** (reprint, Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1985), 109.
[4] Everett Ferguson, "Alexander Campbell's `Sermon on the Law': A Historical and Theological Examination, ***Restoration Quarterly*** 29, no. 2 (Second Quarter 1987): 83.
[5] Ibid., 83.
[6] Adolf Harnack, ***The Christian Church and the Old Testament***, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 10, quoted in Walter C. Kaiser, ***Toward Rediscovering The Old Testament*** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 14.
[7] Marcion's views are gleaned from Tertullian's five-book refutation, ***Against Marcion--***written during the early part of the third century.
[8] Everett Ferguson, "Christian Use of the Old Testament," in ***The World and Literature of the Old Testament,*** ed. John T. Willis (Austin: Sweet Publishing Co., 1979), 373.
[9] Walter Kaiser, ***Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 24-25.
[10] Greg L. Bahnsen, ***Theonomy in Christian Ethics*** (New Yersey: Presbyterian Publishing Co., 1984), 209-10.
[11] Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, *The Greek New Testament*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1983.
[12] Ibid.
[13] John R. W. Stott, ***Christ the Controversialist*** (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 148.
[14] Bahnsen, ***Theonomy in Christian Ethics***, 46.
[15] Robert A. Hawkins, "Covenant Relations of the Sermon on the Mount," ***Restoration Quarterly*** 12 (First Quarter, 1969): 1-9.
[16] W. D. Davies, ***Christian Origins and Judaism*** (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 56.
[17] J. Y. Campbell, "Fulfill, Accomplish," in ***A Theological Word Book of the Bible***, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962), 87-88.
[18] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, ***Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 189-209.
[19] Bahnsen, ***Theonomy in Christian Ethics***, 64.
[20] Ibid.
[21] It is in this vein that Paul addresses the believers at Rome: "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted." (Romans 6:17). The KJV renders this verse: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." The Greek text is: uJphkouvsate de; ejk kardiva" ("but you obeyed from the heart").
[22] Heikki Raisanen, "Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law," in ***Studia Biblica, 1978: Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors, Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies***, ed. E. A. Livingston (Shefield: University Press, 1980), 305, quoted in Walter Kaiser, ***Toward Old Testament Ethics*** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 308.
[23] Kittel, Gerhard and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds., ***Theological Dictionary of the New Testament***

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), vol. 4, s.v. "The Law in the New Testament," by W. Gutbrod, 1071.
[24] Ibid., 1087-1088.
[25] John Murray, "Law," in ***The New Bible Dictionary,*** ed. J. J. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 722.

Unity in Jesus: An Analysis of Perfection and Imperfection in Knowledge

Thrust **Statement: Salvation is not contingent upon absolute perfection in knowledge.**

Scripture Reading: **2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14 and 15.**

> Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And, I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name. The reformers of every age, whether political or religious or literary, have protested against the tyranny of the dead, and in doing so have called for innovation and insight in place of tradition.[1]

This essay is designed to assist elders, preachers, and members within the Churches of Christ to become more adept in correctly handling the Word of God (**2 Timothy 2:15**).[2] In order to accomplish this goal, it is my intention to share with leaders and members the tools needed to recapture the art of how to read the Bible in order to maintain the unity for which Jesus prayed in His priestly prayer (**John 17:20-23**). This article analyzes Paul's handling of differences within the congregations at Rome and Corinth. This brief analysis of Unity in Jesus demonstrates that imperfection in understanding does not, in and of itself, warrant the stigma of false prophets as a result of misinterpretation—a term frequently employed by many well-meaning Christians. Also this paper discusses the failure on the part of many Christians in their oversight to differentiate between certain views that have contributed to a breakdown of unity among God's people.

To illustrate the importance of the unity for which Jesus prayed, Paul is called upon to emphasize the urgency of the matter. It is in this regard that Paul pleaded with Christians at Ephesus to "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (**Ephesians 4:3**). This mandate is essential on the part of every believer in order to fulfill the prayer of Jesus for unity so that the world may believe. Not only did Paul plead with the Ephesians, he also encouraged the Christians in Rome to "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (**Romans**

15:7).

Since God accepted them with imperfection in their lives and in their knowledge, then Paul called upon them to exercise the same kind of love and forbearance toward their fellow Christians for whom Christ died. Many devout Christians do not realize the purpose of Jesus' prayer because they do not discern who is or who is not a false prophet in the light of the context of Matthew's narrative. Jesus prayed for oneness and Paul also called for union. This paper explores ways to bring about the fulfillment of Jesus' and Paul's prayer for singularity of purpose.

Since my personal ministry is primarily confined within the parameters of the Churches of Christ, I feel that a part of my ministry is to help correct the abuses of God's Word handed down to us from our forefathers within the Churches of Christ. This movement (Campbell/Stone) started out as a unity movement, but soon crystallized into warring factions, each promoting its own brand of Christianity.[3] Today, for example, within the Churches of Christ, one soon discovers that there are approximately twenty-five divisions—each claiming to be the loyal church.

Each group maintains that it is speaking where the Bible speaks and is silent where the Bible is silent. For one not to subscribe to the orthodoxy of a particular group is to receive the label false prophet. Whenever a distinctive religious group sets forth its interpretation of a singular Scripture, then for one to disagree with that traditional exposition is tantamount to disagreeing with God Himself. In this philosophy of explanation, one does not distinguish between one's critique of God's Word and the Word of God itself. If one group sets forth a perception of Scripture that does not conform to the status quo of another camp, then the "at odds" fellowship is accused of not speaking where the Bible speaks.

Unity among many Churches of Christ is based upon conformity, not unity in diversity.[4] But numerous Churches of Christ are returning to the Biblical concept of unity in diversity. And, as a result of this stance on unity in diversity by many elders and preachers, the unity in conformity group labels the unity in diversity fellowship as false teachers or liberal brethren.[5]

Today, the Churches of Christ are hopelessly engaged in combat. These skirmishes are based upon a faulty reading of many Scriptures that are employed as means of justification for separation from other Christians. One such Scripture is **Matthew 7:15**: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."[6]

In order to combat this loose type of explanation, it is necessary for me to expound upon the principles of examination to combat an illegal use of Scriptures to foster division. The Word of God provides its own environment for a proper understanding of its teachings. This essay accepts the presupposition that false prophets are not necessarily individuals who fail to make clear the Scriptures, but rather the false prophets are individuals whose ethical behavior is not in harmony with God's law. To accomplish this target of correctly identifying the false prophets in the Gospel of Matthew, as cited above, one must learn how to read the Scriptures with understanding—especially narrative interpretation.[7]

In other words, one must study in detail the context in which the phrase "false prophets" occurs, otherwise, this lack of understanding may present one with obstacles that might hinder a proper application of a healthy understanding as to whom the phrase false prophets designates. This in-depth development of context[8] is essential for proper growth and development and unity in God's *ekklesia* (church). To facilitate the usefulness of contextual studies, this paper briefly explores two congregations in biblical times in which differences existed in order to help believers in Christ today to determine how Christians should react to similar circumstances in which deficiency in knowledge was prevalent.

THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Within the Churches of Christ, the epithet "false prophet" is assigned to individuals who do not subscribe to a particular interpretation of a distinctive fellowship. Correctness in doctrine, according to some, is the measurement of right standing before God. Imperfection in one's knowledge calls forth the title of false prophet. Since this study is concerned about unity in Jesus, then the proper identification of false prophets in the Gospel of Matthew should help to dispel an incorrect classification as to who is and who is not a false prophet in Matthew's gospel.

Paul rebukes the Corinthians for not making allowances for shortcomings in understanding among some believers in the congregation. Paul calls attention in his first letter to Corinth to a wrong perception of correctness as the criterion by which one is placed in a right relationship with God.

> Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God (**1 Corinthians 8:1-3**).

Paul did not castigate those with imperfection in knowledge as false teachers/prophets. As one peruses the various citations from Scripture, one immediately recognizes that deformity in knowledge does not necessarily mean that one is a false teacher. In the Corinthian letter, Paul is clearly dealing with insufficient knowledge and one's relationship to God—a relationship based upon love, not upon absolute knowledge.

Paul develops in the Corinthian letter the concept that God loves the person with limited knowledge as well as the person with clear insight. With Paul, as long as one loves God—in spite of deficiency in aptitude—this person is acceptable to God. The "intent of the heart" does play an important role in deciding who is and who is not acceptable to God. Paul further demonstrates the principle of love and relationship in the following comments about idols and one's belief system:

> So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. But not everyone knows this (**1**

Corinthians 8:4-7a).

THE ROMAN CHURCH

To set the stage for sounder principles of hermeneutics, a brief reflection upon **Romans 14** and **15** should shed further light on how Paul reacted toward those whose knowledge was deficient. In these two chapters, Paul deals with those who wanted to make exact interpretation the criterion by which one determines one's faithfulness or unfaithfulness to God. The **first four verses of chapter 14** demonstrate forcefully Paul's attitude in this matter of reception and rejection. Paul captures this spirit of patience in graphic language in this letter to Rome.

> Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (**Romans 14:1-4**).

Paul did not accuse the misinformed as being false prophets/teachers, but rather he rebuked those who passed judgment on those who were mistaken. God can make one stand even with deformity in one's knowledge.

DIFFERENTIATION OF CONCEPTS

This essay seeks to eliminate the confusion of certain terms that encourages and promotes division within the Churches of Christ. In not distinguishing between certain terms exercised by the Spirit, many Christians have brought about chaos in the *ekklesia* of God and are hopelessly divided into numerous camps. Part of the problem lies with the failure to differentiate adequately between terms employed by various branches within the Churches of Christ. For example, one's delinquency in not differentiating between *unity* and *fellowship*, *unity* and *conformity*, *fellowship* and *agreement, gospel* and *doctrine,* and *fellowship* and *endorsement* has contributed to a proliferation of sects within the Churches of Christ. And an inexact use of the above terms continues to uphold the orthodoxy of each divided circle. Thus, when one does not make proper applications of the various phrases employed among many Christians, then this lack of proper differentiation contributes to an abuse of the phrase "false prophets."

By distinguishing between specific key phrases adopted by many, this clarification of understanding will help to clear away the underbrush that prevents Christians from properly interpreting false prophets in the Book of Matthew. By eliminating certain presuppositions, one can approach the text without a lot of excess baggage. The following scenario is a brief analysis of the various cliches employed by many well-meaning Christians to uphold their brand of orthodoxy. This paper seeks to awaken within every individual a correct understanding of the numerous rigid formulas in order to promote the unity for which Jesus prayed and to correctly identify the false prophets that He warned against.

Unity and Fellowship

Some leaders within the Churches of Christ do not make a distinction between *unity* and *fellowship*. According to some Christians, unity is founded upon fellowship of agreement, not unity created by the Holy Spirit. Many Christians advocate that the unity of the Spirit is as a result of fellowship with other believers in the same interpretative community,[9] but this philosophy is not Biblical.[10] Unity is that which the Holy Spirit creates, not man. It is the Spirit's unity.[11] In fact, Paul writes, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (**Ephesians 4:3**). In other words, Paul says, "spare no effort." To what end? Not to produce a unity, not to create a unity, not to try to arrive at a unity, but to keep the unity. This unity is already in existence. It is unity of all those who believe and respond to the message of redemption expounded in **chapters 1—3 of Ephesians**. In other words, fellowship is a fruit of unity, not unity a fruit of fellowship. Carl Ketcherside is therefore right when he says,

> The Spirit introduces all of the obedient believers into one body and thus forms an active fellowship of all who respond to the Good News. He does this without regard for nation or social distinctions. He generates a vital unity of all who are regenerated.[12]

Unity and Conformity

Again, Christians must differentiate between *unity* and *conformity*. Within the Christian community, Christians have sought to base a superstructure of religion upon attainment to a certain degree of knowledge and wisdom. The traditional concept of unity is based upon conformity in knowledge and wisdom.[13] But, it goes almost without saying that conformity in the absolute demands equal ability of perception, simultaneous arrival at perfection in knowledge, and universality of wisdom. Alexander Campbell drove home this point extremely well when he penned:

> It is cruel to excommunicate a man because of the imbecility of his intellect. I have been censured long and often for laying too much stress upon the assent of the understanding; but those who have most acrimoniously censured me, have laid much more stress upon the assent of the mind than I have ever done. I never did, at any time exclude a man from the kingdom of God for a mere imbecility of intellect; or, in other words, because he could not assent to my opinions.[14]

The unity for which Jesus prayed is not external organizational unity. This unity is the unity of persons. It is a fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with all those who believe. This means that the unity in the *ekklesia* of God involves this fellowship of being. When one is born again, born of the Spirit, or becomes a partaker of the divine nature, this person shares in this unity for which Jesus prayed. And so He calls everyone into the fellowship through the Spirit (**1 Corinthians 12:13**). There can be no unity at all in our Lord's sense apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit who creates within every believer this new nature. Paul wrote: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (**1 Corinthians 12:13**). Jürgen Moltmann once said with his typical

pungency:

> The unity of the congregation is a unity in freedom. It must not be confused with unanimity, let alone uniformity in perception, feeling or morals. No one must be regimented, or forced into conformity with conditions prevailing in the church. Everyone must be accepted with his gifts and tasks, his weaknesses and handicaps. This unity is an evangelical unity, not a legal one.[15]

Fellowship and Agreement

Another concept that divides many within the Churches of Christ is that some do not make a separation between the terms *fellowship* and *agreement*. In many camps, if there is no agreement, then there is no fellowship. Leaders and members throughout Churches of Christ are now realizing that fellowship does not come as a result of one's agreement upon matters of opinion and interpretation, but rather one's ability to reach agreement upon doctrinal issues comes as a result of fellowship. Christians are not one in opinion; they are one in Christ. One does not become a child of God through study, acquisition of knowledge, learning of the law, or skill as teacher but through procreation—not through education. Ketcherside is quite correct in observing that

> As God accepted us in our weakness, with mistaken ideas, warped views and unhealthful attitudes, so we must accept each other in the same state or condition. We must not make the kingdom of heaven to consist of our convictions, attitudes or opinions, but of citizens who must be tolerant of each other in such matters, else there can be no kingdom of heaven at all.[16]

Gospel and Doctrine

Next, one must discriminate between *gospel* and *doctrine*, a separation drawn by the writers of the New Testament. There is as much difference between the gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine as there is between the sperm from which a child is begotten and the food that he eats after he is born. Paul knew the difference between the seed from which life came and the daily bread upon which the children fed. He knew the difference between gospel and doctrine and between faith and knowledge. He knew that the gospel brought one into being while the doctrine was essential to one's growth and well being; Paul did not make a test of fellowship out of spiritual digestion.[17] Those who confuse chastisement of a child with begettal and cannot distinguish between correction and conception are in a sad predicament.[18]

Fellowship and Endorsement

Once more, one must distinguish between fellowship and endorsement, which is one of the major problems within the Churches of Christ. Many are under the impression that to have fellowship with one another is to endorse whatever the other person believes, which cannot be true. All Christians are in fellowship with God, but who is so foolish as to believe that God endorses everything a person believes or does? In Paul's letter to the Romans, he writes, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters" (**14:1**). Again, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (**15:7**). But still, someone may ask, "Are you in

fellowship with error?" No, one is in fellowship with individuals. The question posed by many is: "Are you in fellowship with brothers in error?" One's response must be "yes," because that is the only kind of brothers and sisters one knows about. As Alexander Campbell has made clear:

> So long as unity of opinion was regarded as a proper basis of religious union, so long have mankind been distracted by the multiplicity and variety of opinions. To establish what is called a system of orthodox opinions as the bond of union, was, in fact, offering a premium for new diversities in opinion, and for increasing, *ad infinitum*, opinions, sects, and divisions. . . . But the grandeur, sublimity, and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this, that THE BELIEF OF ONE FACT, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of this ONE FACT, and submission to ONE INSTITUTION expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.[19]

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study is to teach leaders and members of the Churches of Christ the true nature of unity. Also, this paper is designed to assist individuals in learning how to determine who is or is not a false prophet so that unity in Jesus may be maintained. If Christians are going to advocate unity in Jesus, the unity for which our Lord prayed, one must understand certain key terms in order to determine the foundation of unity. Since all Christians are under a mandate to "Be imitators of God . . . and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (**Ephesians 5:1-2**), it is imperative that everyone work toward making "every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (**4:3**).

My hypothesis is that when Christians are taught how to differentiate between certain key phrases, they will arrive at a correct understanding and identification of who the false prophets are in Matthew and, thus, maintain the unity for which Jesus prayed. My emphasis in this study has called attention to the "unity of the Spirit" that all Christians are to strive to uphold. Since Christians are to preserve this unity in all good consciousness, a number of cliches were analyzed to help clear away the underbrush or cobwebs in their thinking so that they do not violate their beliefs. This paper sought to assist individuals in eradicating fuzzy understanding in order to bring about an answer to Christ's priestly prayer for unity (**John 17**).

Also, this essay explored the utter impossibility of making absolute perfection in knowledge the condition of salvation and fellowship. Since many Christians within the Churches of Christ advance unblemished perfection in knowledge of one's party beliefs before they can extend the right hand of fellowship, Paul was called upon to see if this philosophy is what he taught before he extended friendly intercourse to other devoted saints. To refute faultlessness in knowledge as a prerequisite for association, this paper looked at two congregations (Corinth and Rome) in which differences existed in order to determine from a biblical perspective the mind-set to be exercised by Christians in similar circumstances today. In spite of disagreements within these two fellowships, Paul called for forbearance, not ostracism.

This paper is not designed to question the sincerity of those who disagree with the findings set forth in this brief study of Unity in Jesus, for these individuals, too, are seeking to be true to the Word of God. But, rather, it is to encourage individuals to become peacemakers, not piecemakers. In other words, Christians are to promote peace and harmony, not to fracture the body of Christ into warring factions.

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[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 65.

[2] All Scripture citations are from the NIV, unless stated otherwise.

[3] See Thomas Campbell, "Declaration and Address," in C. A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, reprint, 1985, 107, 108 where he writes in Proposition One: "That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians."

[4] For an example of this mind-set, see Jerry Dickinson, "Unity in Diversity," *Old Paths Advocate* LXVII, no. 8 (August 1995): 1, 8-9. The one-cup, non-Sunday school, grape juice only, bread pinchers, and so on, publish this particular journal. See also Don L. King, "Proper Perspective," *Old Paths Advocate* LXVII, no. 9 (September 1995):2, 7. Billy D. Dickinson writes another insightful article that discloses the inner feelings of this peculiar fellowship, "False Teachers and Fellowship, *Old Paths Advocate* LXVIII, no. 10 (October 1995): 1, 9.

[5] See J. E. Choate, "The Baby Boomers and Unity in Diversity," *Firm Foundation* 108, no. 8 (August 1993): 18-20.

[6] See Dallas Burdette, "Who Are the False Prophets Within the Churches of Christ" [ON-LINE]. Available from www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 26 May 2000], located under caption BIBLICAL STUDIES, then under subheading GOSPEL OF MATTHEW for documentation to validate this distinctive use of Matthew 7:15 within the Churches of Christ.

[7] See Dallas Burdette, "A Literary Analysis of the Gospel of Matthew" [ON-LINE]. Available from www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 26 May 2000], located under caption BIBLICAL STUDIES, then under subheading GOSPEL OF MATTHEW for the advantages of narrative application in seeking to understand the individual texts such as **Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24.**

[8] In order to ascertain the meaning that is attached to any word or phrase, one must examine the context. The word "context" is from Latin, which means to "weave together" and is applied to written documents. The context is the connection of thought that runs through every passage, which constitutes for itself a whole. The immediate context is that which immediately precedes or follows a given word, phrase, or sentence. Not only must the context be considered, but one must also investigate the scope and plan of the author.

[9] Interpretative communities are composed of members who share a particular reading "strategy," or a "set of community assumption." See M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms,* 6th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), 271. See also Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980). I have chosen to use "interpretative community" rather than "interpretive community" as employed by Fish.

[10] For a fuller explanation of these terms, see Dallas Burdette, "The 'Is' and 'Is Not' of Fellowship, *Restoration Review* 15, no. 10 (December 1973): 194-196.

[11] See Dallas Burdette, "The Spirit Makes Us One," *Restoration Review* 16, no. 4 (April 1974): 276-277.

[12] Carl Ketcherside, "The Spirit and Unity," *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 2 (July 1963): 3 [99]. To access all of the issues of *Mission Messenger* [On-Line], go to: www.unity-in-diversity.org

[13] For an insightful article on unity, see Leroy Garrett, "Unity is God's Gift," *Restoration Review* 15, no. 8 (October 1973): 150-152. See also Carl Ketcherside, "The Spirit and Unity," *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 7 (July 1963): 1-16.

[14] Alexander Campbell, "Millennium—No. II," *Millennial Harbinger* 1, no. 4 (Monday, April 5, 1830): 13, 14.

[15] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 343.

[16] Carl Ketcherside, "Contrary to Doctrine," *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 3 (March 1965): 4.

[17] See Dallas Burdette, "Restoring the Biblical Ideal of Preaching" in *Restoration Forum VIII* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1990), 147-155.

[18] See Carl Ketcherside, "Gospel and Doctrine," *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 2 (February 1965): 1-11. I am indebted to Ketcherside for assisting me in a clearer understanding of the distinction between gospel and doctrine.

[19] Alexander Campbell, "The Foundation of Hope and of Christian Union," The

Christian Baptist 1, no. 9 (April 5, 1824): 176, 177.

Where the Scriptures Speak: A Historical Investigation and Interpretation of Thomas Campbell's Motto

Thrust Statement: **Thomas Campbell did not employ his cliché in the sense of book chapter and verse for every item practiced by Christians.**

Scripture Reading: **1 Peter 4:11**

> We assume that a reasonably intelligent person is logically consistent, and therefore we seek to interpret what he says in one place in the light of what he says elsewhere. It is a basic rule of hermeneutics that a particular teaching should be interpreted in the light of general teaching, that is, in light of its context. Every teacher expects that his pupils will not take his words out of context. That context is the totality of what he has said or written elsewhere.[1]

INTRODUCTION

"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent" became the battle cry for the birth of the Reformation movement initiated by Thomas and Alexander Campbell.[2] This slogan became the impetus for a movement that resulted in three distinctive bodies: (1) Churches of Christ, (2) Christian Churches, and (3) Disciples of Christ. This cliché is quoted by all three movements to call attention to their reliance upon the Bible and the Bible alone for their faith and practice.

Even though all three movements rely upon the same motto, no two can agree upon the exact blueprint or exact pattern supposedly set forth in the New Testament. The movements cannot agree over the Scripturalness of missionary societies, Bible colleges, located preachers, orphan homes, and so on. Also, within the Churches of Christ, Christians cannot agree upon the pattern to be observed in a so-called worship service; namely Sunday school or non-Sunday school, individual cups or one common cup, instrumental music or vocal singing only, wine or grape juice, break the bread or pinch the bread in the communion, and so on.

The question that confronts every believer is: What did this epigram mean originally in its origin? Still another question is: How should believers interpret this phrase in seeking to adhere to the teachings of the Bible in their lives: Again, how does one apply this cliché to the present

day controversies over the many divisions that exist within the body of Christ? In order to arrive at an honest interpretation of this now famous motto, it is imperative that one considers its historical background. In order to grasp the real purpose behind this motivating epigram, it is necessary to briefly look at Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* as well as the writings of his son, Alexander. For one to avoid subjective postulations, one must look at the evidence—the document itself—for an objective analysis.

For example, one discovers that Campbell employed this cliché to eliminate sectarianism within the various denominations. That is to say, he employed the phrase to call attention to the spirit of factiousness and division that existed within Christendom. In other words, one ought not, according to Thomas Campbell, to make one's inferences and deductions from Scripture premises the criteria whereby one determines whether one is or is not a Christian. This essay explores the "birth of a motto" in order to arrive at a correct understanding of the original cliché. This section explores the history leading up to the framing of the motto. What were the events behind this now famous phrase that launched his statement into orbit? What were the implications for such a cliché? In discussing the "birth of a motto," one must explore the very heart of this cliché in order to apply the phrase as it was originally intended to be used.

Next, this essay explores the "intent of the motto." What was the motive behind the slogan? Then, the essay analyzes the "historical roots of the motto." Since John Locke influenced both Campbells, then an investigation of the political and religious history before and during the life of Locke is essential to understand correctly the drive behind the writings of Campbell's *Declaration and Address.* In order to unfold the thinking of the Campbells, then one must read Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. This letter takes one behind the scenes in order to grasp more fully the impact that Locke's writing had upon the Campbells. This is especially true of Locke's letter concerning toleration. Locke's letter of toleration reveals a spirit of inconsideration for the dissidents. This letter reveals the history of kings and queens in their endeavors to enforce conformity upon their subjects. This history begins with the reign of Henry VII (1509-1547) and concludes with the reign of William of Orange (1689-1702).

And, finally, this paper discusses the comparison between Locke and Campbell. This section parallels the thoughts among Locke and Thomas and Alexander Campbell. For instance, the use of certain words and phrases employed by all three men sheds light on how Thomas and Alexander Campbell relied heavily for their call for toleration among Christians in their new movement. For example, consider the following words or phrases: (1) heresy, (2) expressly stated, and (3) Church of Christ. This history sets the stage for a clearer understand of the motive behind Locke's letter about toleration and the Campbells concern over toleration.

BIRTH OF A MOTTO

> As to whether we have failed the motto or it has failed us depends on what Campbell meant by it or how we interpret it. Campbell never expanded on what he meant by it. He first introduced it to the Christian Association of Washington, the para-church entity he organized in 1809 when he launched his movement to unite the Christians in all the sects. When it was pointed out that if he followed such a rule he would have to give up infant baptism, he conceded that such might be the case, a decision he finally made. But Campbell never examined the broader implication of his motto as a rule of interpretation, such as whether something is forbidden if it is not expressly stated in Scripture, or if we are authorized to act only "where the Scriptures speak."[3]

On February 9, 1808, the Chartiers Presbytery convened a heresy trial against Thomas Campbell.[4] This trial was the first detailed heresy trial in the

United States.[5] Part of the charges brought against Campbell had to do with administering the Lord's Supper without properly questioning the participants. As a result of this failure to adhere to the traditions of the Presbytery, Rev. Mr. Anderson levels the charge that Mr. Campbell says: "that we have nothing but human authority or agreement for confessions of faith, testimonies, covenanting and fast days before the dispensing of the Lord's Supper."[6]

In response to the charges, Mr. Campbell crisply articulates his sentiments:

> That we have no formal or express command either by Christ or his apostles enjoining upon the Pastors of the Catholic Church or any part of it to draw up a compend of the Divine truths contained in the word of God and to make approbation of them a term of communion to entrants into the Church of Christ as a *sine qua non* of their admission. [7]

On September 13, 1808, Thomas Campbell renounced the authority of the Presbytery.[8] Why did the Presbytery reject Campbell and why did he renounce their authority? "Thomas Campbell was rejected, not for violating a clear 'Thus saith the Lord,' but for deviating from a party creed," according to Leroy Garrett.[9] Even though the Presbytery defrocked[10] Thomas Campbell, he continued to advocate Christian unity among the various Christian sects.

Since Thomas Campbell and others had no formal meetinghouse, they met in private homes. As a result of these gatherings, the group began to give more attention to the Bible as the rule of faith and practice. Later, a special meeting was proposed to set forth a clear and distinct statement of the principles they advocated. One such meeting took place in the home of Abraham Altars.[11] The original intent of their gatherings was not to organize another religious party, but rather to promote unity within the Christian community. Richardson is especially helpful in this area when he writes:

> No separation from the religious parties had been contemplated—no bond of union amongst those attending the meetings had been proposed. . . . Neither on his part however, nor on that of any member, was there the slightest intention of forming a new religious part. On the contrary, the whole design of the effort was, if possible, to put an end to Partyism, and to induce the different religious denominations to unite together upon the Bible as the only authorized rule of faith and practice, and to desist from their controversies about matters of mere opinion and expediency.[12]

During this meeting, in the home of Abraham Altars, Thomas Campbell set forth the motto that became the "guiding star" of the Movement: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."[13] What did Thomas Campbell seek to convey by this motto? What was behind this statement? Robert Richardson, Alexander Campbell's biographer, unveils the intent behind the "rule" when he summarizes the objectives of the Christian Association of Washington:

> The whole design of the effort was, if possible to put an end to Partyism, and to induce the different religious denominations to unite together upon the Bible as the only authorized rule of faith and practice, and to desist from their controversies about matters of mere opinion and expediency."[14]

Thomas Campbell sought to put an end to sectarianism that existed in all of the various denominations. To Campbell nothing ought to be made a term of communion that God did not explicitly order in His Holy Word. In other words, since the Word of God did not require an inquisition before observing the Lord's Supper, then one should choose to observe the formula, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." Creeds could not be the test of fellowship, only the Word of God. Prevailing error, even today, still crystallizes around the now famous expression. Twenty-one years after the *Declaration and Address*, Alexander Campbell, Thomas Campbell's son, set forth the idea behind the phrase concerning unity:

> It is cruel to excommunicate a man because of the imbecility of his intellect. We have been censured long and often for laying too much stress upon the assent of the understanding; but those who have most acrimoniously censured us, have laid much more stress upon the assent of the mind, than we have ever done. We never did, at any time, exclude a man from the kingdom of God for a mere imbecility of intellect; or, in other words, because he could not assent to our opinions.[15]

Also, Richardson draws attention to Thomas Campbell's motto:

> It was from the moment when these significant words were uttered and accepted that the more intelligent ever afterward dated the *formal and actual commencement of the Reformation* which was subsequently carried on with so much success, and which has already produced such important changes in religious society over a large portion of the world.[16]

Further, Garrett correctly points out that this rule "is one of the most often quoted non-biblical sayings in the history of the Movement, and is generally viewed as the essence of its plea."[17] Even though this rule was initiated by Thomas Campbell, nevertheless, it appears that this concept originated out of the Reformed tradition, under the leadership of Zwingli (1484-1531) in Switzerland.[18] One of the mottoes out of the Reformation Movement of Luther and Zwingli was "Scripture alone." This slogan, "Scripture alone," is similar to Thomas Campbell's motto. Both slogans mean essentially the same. The reformers sought, even as the Campbells, to restore primitive Christianity. These mottoes sound simple enough, yet Christians were/are still divided over what "Scripture alone" meant. For example, out of the Lutheran Reformation and the Zwinglian Restoration movements, division proliferated. Interpretation played a key role in deciding how to interpret the phrase "Scripture alone."

From its inception, the rule announced by Thomas Campbell has been questioned as to its soundness. Can this rule be followed *in toto* (totally, entirely)? Immediately following Campbell's statement, Andrew Munro, a bookseller and postmaster at Canonsburg, said, "Mr. Campbell, if we adopt that as a basis, then there is an end of infant baptism."[19] Dr. Richardson informs his readers that James Foster also questioned Thomas Campbell with great emphasis: "Father Campbell, how could you, in the absence of any authority in the Word of God baptize a child in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?"[20] Whereupon, "Mr. Campbell was quite confounded at this question. His face colored, he became for a moment irritated, and

said in reply, in an offended tone: 'Sir, you are the most intractable person I ever met.'"[21] Ultimately, that which was intended as a basis of unity became the rule that divided.

INTENT OF THE MOTTO: UNITY

> It is worthwhile to consider for a moment the general function of scholarship within any religious tradition, and particularly the Christian. At certain times in the development of a religion, it is necessary for men to stand off from their beliefs and practices, to analyze them and order them, to attempt to understand them better in the light of their origins and growth and conflict with other beliefs and practices. The primary motive here may be the desire to purify the religious tradition itself in a time of corruption.[22]

The analysis of the "birth of a motto" concluded with the anecdote about Thomas Campbell's stern reaction to Andrew Munro's response to the Scripturalness of infant baptism. The attitude of Campbell's reply should once for all demonstrate that Campbell did not mean that one had to have "book, chapter, and verse" for every teaching within the Christian community. The objective of this chapter is to understand the slogan in light of its origin. To understand this saying, one must go back to the fountain or the source of its origin.

Thomas Campbell and the Declaration and Address

Following the expulsion of Campbell from the Presbytery, the Christian Association of Washington was formed to advocate Christian unity among disciples of Christ upon "Scripture alone." On August 17, 1809, twenty-one of their number came together to determine the means whereby the Association could carry out the principles enunciated by Campbell. During the meeting the *Declaration and Address* was presented.[23] The cliché enunciated by Campbell is best explained by his sixth proposition in his *Declaration and Address*:

> 6. That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession[24]

The last sentence in the above citation sets forth clearly what Campbell intended to convey by his "now" famous motto. Even though this clause is couched in different words from the "now" famous motto, nevertheless, this sentence is a good commentary on the cliché. The *Sitz im Leben* (setting in life, or life situation) of this dictum demonstrates beyond doubt the intent of Campbell's "now" famous guide. When the Presbytery sought to bind their "inferences and deductions" upon Campbell as terms of communion, he refused to comply with their wishes, thus, he was defrocked or excommunicated.

A close reading of the *Declaration and Address* with the *Appendix*[25] will enhance one's understanding of one of the most important documents in the history of the Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ. This document advances unity among all believers in the various denominations.[26] Campbell did not press forward the notion that every person had to see eye to eye upon every issue, but rather that no person should make his "inferences and

deductions" the test or standard whereby one determines if one is or is not a child of God. Although Campbell wrote more than one hundred ninety years ago, Christians should still join him in his sentiments expressed in "Article 2" in the *Declaration and Address:*

> 2. That, although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable division among them. They ought to receive each other, as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And, for this purpose, they ought all to walk by the same rule; to mind and speak the same things, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.[27]

In his *Appendix*, a response to the sectarianism of the Presbytery and explanation of the *Declaration and Address*, Campbell seems to have fully assessed the Christian Association of Washington's position:

> We only pretend to assert, what every one that pretends to reason must acknowledge, namely, that there is a manifest distinction between an express Scripture declaration, and the conclusion or inference which may be deduced from it; and that the former may be clearly understood, even where the latter is but imperfectly if at all perceived. . . . Christian unity and love, ought not to be set aside to make way for exalting our inferences above the express authority of God. Our inference, upon the whole, is, that where a professing Christian brother opposes or refuses nothing either in faith or practice, for which there can be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," that we ought not to reject him because he cannot see with our eyes as to matters of human inference, of private judgment, "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish? How walkest thou not charitably?" Thus we reason, thus we conclude, to make no conclusion of our own, nor of any other fallible fellow-creature, a rule of faith or duty to our brother.[28]

Unless God "expressly" commands something, then, no one should impose upon others his/her deductions. There was no "thus saith the Lord" concerning an examination before partaking of the Lord's Supper. Thus, Campbell refused to make this a criterion by which to determine whether one could or could not participate. This practice of exclusion is what Campbell meant by the phrase: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak, where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

As stated above, to understand this phrase correctly, one must read the *Appendix* along with the *Declaration and Address*. C. A. Young does seem to have fully captured the proper way to read this document when he writes:

> One has but to imagine the coming together of Seceder Presbyterian sectarianism, bigotry and exclusiveness and Thomas Campbell's catholic and affectionate nature, to account for this document. One must read it with this background in mind.[29]

This exclusiveness and bigotry existed within all denominations. Everyone demanded that individuals conform to his/her particular brand of orthodoxy. This philosophy of religious fractiousness, as a whole, has not changed. Christians are still thrown out for the least infraction of the party creed. The voluminous writings of Alexander Campbell continue to explain, though indirectly, the motto initiated by his father. For example, he wrote in the *Christian Baptist*, approximately fifteen years after the *Declaration and Address, that*

> So long as unity of opinion was regarded as a proper basis of religious union, so long have mankind been detracted by the multiplicity and variety of opinions. To establish

> what is called a system of orthodox opinions as the bond of union, was, in fact, offering a premium for new diversities in opinion, and for increasing, *ad infinitum*, opinions, sects, and divisions.[30]

Again, in Alexander Campbell's most discerning article on "The Foundation of Hope and of Christian Union," he expresses the *summum bonum* (the highest or supreme good) of Christian unity, which is what the *Declaration and Address* is about. He captures the very essence of Christian unity when he writes:

> But the grandeur, sublimity, and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this, that THE BELIEF OF ONE FACT, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes to salvation. The belief of this ONE FACT, and submission to ONE INSTITUTION expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.[31]

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF CAMPBELL'S MOTTO

> Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is a healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[32]

Traditions often develop into a "fossil museum." The cliché initiated by Thomas Campbell to unite Christians in all the sects is now a cancerous growth that needs surgery to restore it to its original intent—religious toleration! Since the Campbell's were influenced by the writings of John Locke (1632-1704)[33] concerning political and religious toleration, one would do well to make a comparison between the writings of Locke and Campbell. This comparison should help to clarify the central thrust behind the now famous motto—"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak." It goes almost without saying that the Campbells based their religious toleration upon the Word of God, but, on the other hand, both men (Thomas and Alexander) relied upon the phraseology of Locke to convey the truths of God encapsulated in human language. Even though Locke did not employ this particular motto, nevertheless, he advocated the same principle in his famous *A Letter Concerning Toleration*.

How should one interpret the letter of Locke? Why was Locke so concerned about toleration toward dissenters in religion? How do Locke's writings shed light upon Thomas and Alexander Campbell in their religious climate? Dr. Francis Schaeffer sets forth a principle of interpretation that has some helpful insight in understanding the connection between Locke and Campbell. Here is what he says:

> If we are to understand present-day trends in thought, we must see how the situation has come about historically and also look in some detail at the development of philosophic thought-forms. Only when this has been done are we ready to go on to the practical aspects of how to communicate unchanging truth in a changing world.[34]

Schaeffer cautions against the "autonomous principle," that is to say, the study of disciplines in unrelated parallel lines. This understanding of "parallel lines" is essential to a proper understanding of Locke and Campbell and also the Stone/Campbell Movement of the twentieth century. One must not isolate Locke and Campbell's writings, but rather study both men as parallel lines. Schaeffer explains "unrelated parallel lines" this way:

> We have studied our exegesis as exegesis, our theology as theology, our philosophy as philosophy; we study something about art as art, we study music as music, without understanding that these are things of man, and the things of man are never unrelated parallel lines.[35]

It is not an accident that the disposition set forth in this now famous phrase of Thomas Campbell and his monumental document about Christian union is also expressed in the writings of John Locke. Both men were concerned about toleration. Some expressions are the same in both documents, but it really goes without saying that one does not have to employ identical words in order to communicate the same truths. Approximately one hundred and twenty years before Campbell wrote his *Magna Charta* for the Christian Association of Washington, John Locke also wrote his famous letters concerning *Toleration* in 1689, 1690, and 1692. In these letters he called for religious toleration for all except Roman Catholics and atheists. He advocated allowances for individual opinions on the ground that human understanding was too limited for one man to impose his beliefs on another. In order to understand the Campbells and Locke, one must survey the political and religious philosophy before and during the time of Locke as well as the religious conditions that existed in the time of the Campbells.

THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ENGLAND BEFORE AND DURING THE LIFE OF JOHN LOCKE

The political and religious history of England, beginning with Henry VIII (1509-1547) through William of Orange (1689-1702) and Mary (1689-1694), is crucial to a proper interpretation of the motto: "where the Scriptures speak, we speak." Even though Locke does not quote this cliché, nevertheless, this concept is found sprinkled throughout Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. To properly understand Locke's emphasis upon "expressly stated," one must begin with Henry VIII. In other words, when one uncovers the political and religious turmoil during and after his reign, then this understanding helps one to set the stage for Locke's essay about long-suffering. An investigation of the historical roots of the now famous motto must begin, at least, with the rule of Henry VIII. Without an understanding of this period (1509-1702), one cannot fully appreciate Locke's stress upon an error-free grasp of the biblical meaning of heresy or the characteristics of a true church or broad-mindedness toward dissidents.

Beginning with Henry VIII is not an arbitrary decision, especially since this King is recognized as the founder of the Church of England. This time frame covers approximately two hundred years of history (1509-1702). Near the end of this period (1689), William of Orange plays a significant role in this critical part of England's history. During his reign, Parliament passed the *Act of Toleration* and Locke also wrote his famous *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689). The history preceding both of these actions is essential to a precise awareness of the merit of these transactions. During the reign of these kings and queens (1509-1702), one discovers that certain acts enacted by these kings and queens, along with Parliament, framed rage toward the dissenters. The various *Acts of Uniformity* passed by Parliament were enforced with rigor. Those who would not conform to the *Acts of Uniformity*[36] were persecuted with excommunication, banishment, torture, imprisonment, and even death. To interpret the writings of Locke, it is essential that one begin with the political and religious persecutions leading up to the accession of William of Orange and his wife Mary II, daughter of James II. This history is not intended to be exhaustive, but illustrative of the rage against dissent that caused Locke to write his letter concerning toleration in 1689 and Parliament's decision to issue an *Act of Toleration* in 1689.

Henry VIII (1509-1547)

One hundred twenty years before Locke was born (1632), Henry VIII became king of England (1509). Upon his accession to the throne, he opposed the Reforming Movement and his *Assetia Septem Sacramentorum* won him the title of "Defender of the Faith."[37] Pope Clement gave Henry this title because he stoutly disagreed with the reforms advocated by Luther (1483-1547). After Henry broke with the Catholic Church, he maintained his rights to this title, only it was not the faith of Catholicism with its Pope, even thought the Ten Articles and later the Six Articles promoted the Catholic teaching, but the faith of Henry that he defended. The Six Articles[38] identified the Church of England as entirely Roman Catholic in doctrine, except that he himself was head of the Church of England. In other words, he was sovereign over church and state.

Twenty-five years after Henry's ascension to the throne, the Church of England came into existence (1534). This church began when the English monarch, rather than the Bishop of Rome, was recognized as the head of the church on earth. He summoned Parliament (1534) to pass Acts to transfer the leadership of the Church in England to him.[39] Parliament also passed another law called the Act of Succession in order to declare Henry's marriage to Catherine unlawful, but, at the same time, to declare his marriage to Anne as lawful.[40] In addition to this Act, which declared him to be the head of the church on earth, he also managed to get enacted another Act called the Act of Supremacy, which confirmed Henry the Supreme Head of the Church in England.[41]

Beginning with the reign of Henry, approximately one-third of his kingdom was in the hands of the Catholic Church. Many leaders in the Church did not approve of Henry's actions. Henry was not pleased with the clergy and monks, for they had strongly opposed him in his religious reform. In light of their antagonism, he set about closing the monasteries and taking their estates for himself and the men who supported him. And, as a result of this resentment, he confiscated the cathedrals, monasteries, chapels, and abbeys held estates. Niver writes: "The king's agents visited and inspected these institutions and were supposed to find some irregularity in their management as a just ground for closing them."[42]

Once more, Niver goes right to the heart of the king's tyrannical position of submission to himself as head of the Church of England: "In 1536 the king informed his subjects what they might believe in matters of religion."[43] How did he put forth his demands? Well, he did this through a creed of "Ten Articles"[44] in which he insisted that the people of England must accept and obey—no exceptions without the peril of one's head. Even though Henry had earlier opposed the Reformers, nevertheless, his creed, in certain articles, favored the reformers. However, three years later, the king issued a new creed of Six Articles that supported certain tenets of the Catholic Church. Again, Niver captures the essence of this new creed when he writes:

> Three years later, Henry and the Parliament issued a "new creed" of six articles, supporting six of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, "With this 'whip of six strings' he persecuted his people until the end of his reign. Any one who disagreed with him, was to lose his property for the first offense; for the second he lost his life. In two weeks, five hundred people were arrested, and during the rest of Henry's life, which stretched out eight years longer, twenty-eight were put to death.[45]

Edward VI (1547-1553)

Following the death of Henry in 1547, his son, Edward VI, became king (1547-1553). Edward's father had established an independent church by putting himself in place of the Pope and destroying the monasteries. However, most of the doctrines of the Catholic Church remained

unchanged. The Six Articles provided for the mass and confessional and forbade marriage of the priest. England was divided over these questions of doctrine. The Reformers would do away with it all and have a simple service of song, prayers, and preaching in England. The Six Articles, during Edward's reign, developed into Forty-two Articles, which, years later, were reduced to Thirty-nine.[46] Following the death of Edward, Mary I, also known as "Bloody Mary" assumed the throne of England. Mary was the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon.

Mary I (1553-1558)

Mary was the first woman to rule England (1553-1558). She sought to restore the Catholic form of worship and the rule of the Pope. The Pope was again recognized as the Supreme head of the Church. Mary considered Church and State one entity under her control. Thus, during her reign, religion was considered a part of politics as in previous periods. To rebel against the religion of the State was to be guilty of treason. Those who opposed the state religion were generally considered as enemies of the government and were treated as heretics. Persecution prevailed in great numbers against those who refused to accept the dictates of the State. Niver draws attention to the atrocities that reigned during her stay on the throne:

> The chief Protestant teachers were condemned to be burned in the places where they had taught. Nearly three hundred persons were put to death. Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury and author of the prayer book: Ridley, Bishop of London; and Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, were the most distinguished victims.[47]

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) was responsible for the abolition of church ceremonies, the destruction of images, the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) of 1549 and 1552, and the Forty-two Articles. On the ascension of Mary I, he was accused of treason and sentenced to death under earlier statues. The other bishop, Nicholas Ridley (1500-55), also favored the teachings of the Reformers. And, as a result of his beliefs, he too suffered death by burning upon the ascension of "Bloody Mary." Hugh Latimer (1485-1555), another bishop, also opposed the Six Articles and had earlier resigned his See under the reign of Mary's father, Henry VIII. After his resignation, he later returned to favor, but upon the ascension of Mary I, he was confined to the Tower and burnt (1555) at the stake along with Ridley.

As stated above, those who opposed the state religion were considered enemies of the government. Queen Mary revived the old laws of Henry IV (1399-1413) and Henry V (1413-1422) concerning dissidents. During the reign of Henry IV, a statue was enacted by which persons convicted of teaching heresy, that is to say, opinions that did not conform to the status quo, were turned over to the civil authorities to be burnt before the people.[48] Upon Henry V's ascension to the throne, he followed his father's policies and pursued the Lollards (disciples of Wycliffe [1830-1884]) for their refusal to subscribe to many of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. During his reign, the writings of Wycliffe were ordered burned by the Council of Constance (1415), and his remains were exhumed and burned. This order was carried out in 1428.[49] Following the death of Mary I, Elizabeth ascended to the throne of England.

Elizabeth (1558-1603)

Upon Elizabeth's, daughter or Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, accession to the throne (1558-1603), Parliament decided that the queen must be "Supreme Governor of the Realm" in church matters as well as in other things. Parliament also changed Cranmer's (1489-1556)[50] prayer book[51] by leaving out things that were offensive to the Catholics. Niver writes concerning the revised edition: "This book was ordered to be used in the service of all the

churches in England, under grave penalties for disobeying the order."[52] Before leaving this discussion of Elizabeth, it is significant that

> Elizabeth's own hands were not spotless. As we shall see, nearly two hundred Catholics were put to death in England during her reign. Under her, also, the torture was frequently used to force confessions from the accused, whereas under Mary it had scarcely ever been resorted to. . . . A fine of twenty pounds a month was laid on any one who would not attend the established church. As many as two hundred of the Jesuits were imprisoned or put to death. . . . During the rest of the reign the Catholic dissenters were treated with the greatest severity. Priests and laymen who would not recant were banished, and about fifty, including two women, suffered death. . . . It tried and punished the Puritans harshly. By this time the most of the Catholics had been driven into the established church; and, to make it conform somewhat to the old form of Catholic worship, the High Church party grew up, which Elizabeth herself favored, and which afterwards, by its severity, drove the Puritans into rebellion.[53]

James I (1603-1625)

James I (1603-1625) brought into England a new idea as to the power of the king. Prior to James I being crowned king, the people maintained that the king was not above the law. But James believed that he was above the law and could do as he pleased. Again, Niver writes: "His favorite expression was, 'God makes the king, the king makes the laws.'"[54] From this theory derived the belief that a king derives his power directly from God. Thus, this theory of "divine rights" is sometimes called "the divine right of kings." By virtue of Elizabeth's death, he succeeded to the English throne. On his way from Scotland to London, the Puritans presented him with a petition signed by supposedly one thousand Puritan clergymen to repeal the laws again the dissenters. In actuality, there were only eight hundred signatures. This petition was named "Millenary Petition," named for its supposed signature of one thousand clergymen.[55]

Some of the laws included uniformity in the dress code for robes and the preaching of sermons. The Puritan ministers objected to the wearing of robes[56] and delivering prearranged sermons. In other words, they wished to be allowed to preach sermons of their own. In addition, they did not like to make the sign of the cross when children were baptized, or to kneel in partaking of the Lord's Supper, or to use a ring in a wedding ceremony. To begin with, James I listened to their complaints, but he became extremely angry when they did not agree with him on every point. On the other hand, The English bishops praised his every decision. Thus, he deserted the Presbyterians and gave his support to the English bishops. His wrath also turned toward the Catholics. Even though, at the beginning of his reign, he sought to be more conciliatory toward the Catholics by suspending a law of Elizabeth that fined Catholics for not attending the English Church, yet later he revived this law of fining the Catholics twenty pounds a month if they did not attend the English Church. As a result of the reenactment of this law and the extravagant and heavy fines, many were ruined financially.[57]

As James I came to the throne in 1603, even though he was new to the English throne, nevertheless, he was painfully aware of religious differences within Christendom as a result of his earlier reign in Scotland. To resolve some of these differences, he called a meeting at Hampton Court. One objective of the meeting at Hampton Court, with its thousand rooms built by Cardinal Wolsey, was to deal with the dissension between the Puritan and Anglicans over the Bishop's Bible.[58] The circumstances for this meeting are described in the preface of the Authorized Version:

> The very historical truth is that upon the importunate petitions of the Puritans, as his Majesty's coming to this crown, the conference at Hampton Court having been appointed for hearing their complaints: when by force of reason they were put from all other grounds, they had recourse at the last, to this shift, that they could not with good conscience subscribe to the Communion [Prayer] book, since it maintained the Bible as it was there translated [in the Great Bible], which was, as they said, a most corrupted translation. And although this was judged to be but a very poor and empty shift, yet even hereupon did his Majesty begin to bethink himself of the food that might ensue by a new translation, and presently after gave order for this translation which is now presented unto thee.[59]

From this meeting in 1604, plans were set forth for a new translation of the Scriptures. During this conference, John Rainolds, a Puritan, addressed the king about a new translation of the Holy Scriptures. But the Bishop of London objected: "If every man's humor might be followed, there would be no end to translating."[60] Ultimately, the king agreed to a new translation. But, in this new undertaking, the translators were not at liberty to eliminate certain ecclesiastical words. Fifteen rules were provided for the assistance of the translating committee. One of these rules (number 2) was "the old ecclesiastical words should be retained."[61] An example of an ecclesiastical word would be the English word *church*. The word *church* was retained rather than "congregation," which Wycliffe and Tyndale preferred.[62]

The controversy over the Greek word εςκκλησιψα (ekklhsia, "congregation") did not originate with James I, but rather predates him approximately two hundred twenty years to the earlier translation (1380) by John Wycliffe (1330-1384). Later this controversy over the word *church* surfaced again with William Tyndale (1494-1536). Both Wycliffe and Tyndale refused the English word *church*. Both men objected to the word *church* since this word connotes an ecclesiastical organization, that is, a religious institution or corporation. But, on the other hand, the translation of the Greek word ekklhsia as "congregation" sets forth the true meaning of the Greek word. In other words, the word *congregation* signifies the people of God, the body of Christ, that is to say, the new community of God without reference to a particular party within the Christian community.

Wycliffe published the first English translation from a translation (Latin), but, on the other hand, Tyndale published the first English translation from the original Greek. It is also worthy of note that Erasmus (1469-1536) translated the Greek word ekklhsia as "congregation" in his Latin translation. Wycliffe died before the established Church could prosecute him. But Tyndale was burnt at the stake in 1536 (during the reign of Henry VIII [1509-1547]). It is also significant that the Greek word ekklhsia was employed by the Septuagint translators to translate the Hebrew word lh*q* (q*h*l), which means congregation. The English translators never translate this Hebrew word and the Greek word, as far as this writer can find, as "church" in the Old Testament, but rather as "congregation." Following the reign of James I, Charles the First assumed the throne of England.

Charles I (1625-1649) conducted a reign of terror, civil and religious. For instance, in the civil aspects, he resorted to illegal means of collecting taxes. About eighty persons who refused to pay were put in prison. A third Parliament was convened to address forced loans and arbitrary imprisonments. From this Parliament came the second greatest document in the history of the English nation, namely, the Petition of Rights.[63] As a result of Parliament's actions, James took action against members of Parliament and operated without a Parliament for eleven years. Two men assisted him in this clandestine operation; namely, William Laud, who was soon made Archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas Wentworth, who later became Earl of Strafford and the king's chief adviser.[64]

Laud undertook the task of making the Puritan churches use the prayer book and conduct services according to the Act of Uniformity.[65] In 1604, the clergy of the established Church of England adopted a body of rules explaining how ministers should conduct their services. As stated above, Laud forced the Puritans to use the prayer book and conduct services according to the Act of Uniformity. Ministers were to wear white robes and follow the prayer book accurately, without deviation. In other words, the minister could not read here and there as he saw fit.[66] He employed spies, used the old courts of Star Chamber and High commission to suppress dissent.[67] The clergy were forced to sign an oath never to change the government of the English church.[68] A number of canons were adopted declaring that the king had unlimited power over persons and possessions. Baker, in his history, reveals: "Thousands had fled to America to escape the intolerable policies of Archbishop William Laud."[69] The Archbishop enforced the common law concerning the place of the communion table in the building. The common law stated that the communion table should be in the east end of the church, but the Puritans wanted it in the middle.[70]

Ultimately, Laud was impeached, put in prison, and tried in 1641. He was executed in 1645.[71] Prior to his death, the Puritans gained the majority in the Parliament. Religious and political reforms were started. The Episcopal and liturgical (prayer book) forms were abolished and the Westminster Assembly, made up principally of Puritans, was called to advise Parliament on the creed and government of the New English church. The Westminster confession[72] was adopted by Scotland in 1647 and by England in 1648.[73] In 1646 the Presbyterian type of church government was established and a Presbyterian liturgy for public worship in place of the prayer book of the Church of England, became the norm. Charles I refused to compromise over episcopacy (the system of church government by Bishops). The bone-of-contention hovered over the Episcopal form of church government by bishops versus the Presbyterian form of church government, which centered on restorationism—that is, the blueprint or pattern for church government based on the New Testament documents.

The so-called Bishops' Wars[74] occurred during the reign of Charles I (1625-1649). The English people tolerated the tyranny of the king, but the Scotch Covenanters[75] took up arms against Charles I when he sought to enforce the prayer book upon them. Charles I was defeated, but he later raised another army to whip the Scots into line. But his army showed sympathy with the Scots by breaking into the churches and moving the communion tables into the middle of the building.[76] As stated above, Charles was executed under an Act of Attainder; that is to say, an act of Parliament that condemned him to death without a trial. Laud also was impeached, as listed above, and put in prisons without a trial and executed four years after Charles' death.

Oliver Cromwell

Oliver Cromwell (died September 3, 1658) became Lord Protector of England upon the death of Charles I. He tolerated all Protestant sects except when they wanted to disrupt the

government. He was a friend of the Quakers, sent missionaries to the Indians, and allowed the Jews to return to England. Even though Cromwell tolerated the Quakers, nevertheless, the Puritans persecuted them severely. When Charles II (1660-1685) came to the throne, there were 4,000 of them in jail. Niver, on this point, furnishes worthwhile reading about the plight of the Quakers:

> It was common to slit their noses, cut their ears, bore through their tongues with a hot iron, and whip them through the streets at the cart's tail. Their numbers increased rapidly in spite of this treatment, and in 1675 there were more than 60,000 of them in England. Charles was disposed to favor them. He saw that they were quiet, industrious, and loyal people.[77]

The Quakers first appear in England in the time of Cromwell. They wished to do away with the feats, sports, and shows of the times. This religious group rejected the government of the church by the king and bishops. These devout individuals would not bear arms, refused to pay to support the church, or to observe the Sabbath by formal sermons and prayers. The Quakers believed in the "inner light" by which God reveals right and wrong through the conscience.

Charles II (1660-1685)

Charles II (1660-1685) brought back the Parliament that Cromwell dismissed. His reign also reestablished the old Anglican Church, its bishops, and prayer book. He reopened the theaters; holidays were again celebrated with the old bear baiting along with horse racing, cockfighting, dancing, and buffoonery (court clowns). These festivities were reinstated as a way of life. Upon his accession, he granted pardon to all except the judges and executioners who had put his father (Charles I) to death in 1649. He immediately sought to drive out the Puritans and other dissenters. All dissenters who would not use the prayer book were refused financial assistance from the State.

Charles II also enacted an Act that prohibited religious meetings for dissenters. Dissenters were also disqualified from holding office in a corporation, that is, a village or city. Non-conformist ministers were forbidden to come within five miles of any corporation[78] where they had preached since 1660.[79] With the Restoration,[80] according to Christopher Hill, the "religious toleration ended (temporarily) in 1660. Dissenters were driven out of political life for a century and a half."[81] By the compromise of 1660, the idealists on both sides were sacrificed. Sir Henry Vane (1613-1662)[82] and Major-General Thomas Harrison (1606-1660) were publicly disemboweled. Quakers and other sectaries (dissidents) were driven into a badgered underground existence.[83]

John Bunyan (1628-1688), one of the most famous preachers and writers known today, was imprisoned under these new laws. After the restoration of Charles II, he spent twelve years in the Bedford jail (1660-1672) for preaching without receiving permission from the Established Church (Church of England). During this period he wrote *Grace Abounding to the chief of Sinners* (1666). Following his release from prison in 1772, he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684), and *The Holy War* (1682).[84] In 1672, the Act of Pardon freed him from prison and gave him the liberty to preach.[85] Following his release, he became pastor for the Bedford Baptist Church.

In Scotland, during the reign of Charles II, many accepted the Church of England, but many did not, especially the Covenanters. The Covenanters (Presbyterians) were cruelly persecuted during the reigns of Charles II and his brother, James II (1685-1688). Upon the

Restoration, persecution was enacted with a deadly vengeance in Scotland. For instance, James Guthrie (1612-1661), a Covenanter, was arrested. The principal excuse for his condemnation and execution was about a pamphlet he wrote, *The Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland*. His paper had the honor of being on par with *Lex Rex* by Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661). Rutherford attacked the concept of monarchical absolutism. In other words, according to Rutherford, it is *Lex Rex* (law is king) and not *Rex Lex* (king is law). Both pamphlet and book were burned in the beginning of the "Restoration" of Charles II in 1660.[86] For one to hold a copy of either work was treason against the King and government. Ultimately, Guthrie, along with Captain Govan, another Covenanter, was sentenced to hang on June 1, 1661. The last testimony of Guthrie is worth quoting:

> Jesus Christ is my Life and my Light, my Righteousness, my strength, and my Salvation and all my desire. Him! O Him, I do with all the strength of my soul commend to you. Bless Him, O my soul, from henceforth even forever. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.[87]

Govan's last words are also quite illuminating: "Tell her [that is his wife] that he died in humble confidence and found the Cross of Christ sweet, and that Christ had done all for him and that it was by Him along that he was justified."[88]

In order to enforce religious reform upon the Scots, the Duke of York, who later became King James II (1685-1688), was sent by Charles II (1660-1685), his brother, to govern Scotland. The Duke was determined to bring the covenanters under his control. He hanged, shot, imprisoned, and tortured them into silence.[89] As a result of persecution at home and abroad, many turned their attention to the new colonies in America for political and religious freedom. During this period of tyranny, several new colonies were founded in America. For example, in 1663, the king gave the Carolinas to a company of his friends. Niver calls attention to this transaction:

> The Carolina settlers included Presbyterians harried out of the western counties of Scotland; French Huguenots, or Protestants, driven out by the tyranny of Louis XIV; Quakers from England; Irish from the West Indies, who had been exiled by Cromwell; and other settlers who had been compelled to leave the older colonies.[90]

Also, England seized the Dutch settlements in America in 1664. This territory was given to the Duke of York. This seized area became the colony of New York. Later, the Duke of York granted New Jersey to two of his friends. These two parts—New York and New Jersey—were later purchased by William Penn and other Quakers. Power was then put into the hands of the people, not the government. These colonies were filled up quite rapidly because of religious freedom. In addition to these two colonies, Charles II granted Pennsylvania (1681) to Penn for a debt he owed to Penn. Penn also purchased from the Duke of York three lower counties on the Delaware.[91]

Charles II's reign reeked with political corruption. A reign of legal horror against the Whigs[92] and dissenters proliferated during his rule. A reign of legal horror against Whigs and dissenters proliferated during his rule. Christopher Hills sums up the political turmoil with the following quote:

> In the spring of 1682 the Duke of York returned to England; Jeffreys was made Lord Chief Justice and a Privy Councillor. Sunderland, dismissed in January 1681 for temporarily supporting exclusion, returned to office. A reign of legal terror against

> Whigs and dissenters began. Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge of treason, but was acquitted by a London jury. He fled to the Netherlands, where he died in 1683. . . .
>
> In 1683 . . . the Rye House Plot to seize the King led to the arrest and trial of many leading Whigs. Monmouth went into hiding, the Earl of Essex committed suicide in the Tower; Lord Russell and Algemon Sydney were executed though neither had been active in the plot. Sydney was convicted only of defending the view that government might be resisted in certain circumstances: this too in an unpublished treatise. In 1684 Oates was imprisoned and Danby and a number of Roman Catholic peers were released. Under the Triennial Act a Parliament should have met in 1684, but Charles called none before he died in February 1685. On his death-bed he proclaimed himself a Papist.[93]

Upon the death of Charles II (1685), James II became king of England.

James II (1685-1688)

James II (1685-1688), formerly the Duke of York, had all the beliefs of his father (Charles II) and his grandfather (Charles I) regarding the divine right of kings. The suppression of the Covenanters continued under the direction of Claverhouse.[94] Those who refused to abandon the Covenant[95] were shot, hanged, or drowned. Niver records an heart breaking story of an eighteen year old girl who was drowned as a Covenanter:

> One girl of eighteen, Margaret Wilson, was fastened to a stake at low water in the Solway Firth, to be drowned by the rising tide. As the water rose to her head, she was taken out and asked if she would give up the covenant and attend the Episcopal Church. "Never," she replied. "I am Christ's, let me go!" She was put back, and the waves closed over her.[96]

During the reign of James II, one of his judges, Jeffreys, was known for his wickedness and brutality. The persecutions were not only against religious nonconformists but also against political nonconformists. One such case involved Alice Lisle:

> This lady, seventy years of age, was accused of concealing in her house two fugitives from Monmouth's[97] army. It was not proved that she knew them to be rebels, nor that they were rebels. Three times the jury refused to bring in a verdict of guilty, but they were finally bullied by Jeffreys into submission, and Alice Lisle was put to death.[98]

Jeffreys[99] was sent into the western counties to visit the "assize,"[100] or court towns, and to try persons accused of aiding Monmouth. The bloody court sessions conducted by Jeffreys reeks with wickedness:

> Three hundred and twenty persons were executed, and their mutilated and dismembered bodies were fixed up along the highways and over the doors of town halls and churches, in the different villages where trials were held. Eight hundred and forty-one were sold into slavery under the broiling sun of the English West Indian possessions, there to labor until they died.[101]

Upon the completion of this work of savagery against all who opposed the reigning regime, James congratulated him on his success and made him chancellor. James and the parliament sought to knock down and punish rebels. He increased his army and appointed

Catholics without requiring them to adhere to the Test Act.[102] As a result, the House of Commons became alarmed. At the same time, France, under Louis XIV, revoked the Edict of Nantes,[103] a law that protected French Protestants, and followed the revocation with cruel persecution, which forced thousands to flee into Germany, America, England, and Holland. If James were allowed to disobey the Test Act by choosing Catholics to fill his offices, then he might choose to treat the Protestants as badly as the French King.[104]

James II now openly assailed the Church of England and the Colleges. He created an Ecclesiastical Commission Court, suspended clergymen who justified Protestant doctrines, but, on the other hand, he permitted clergymen who had become Catholics to maintain their places. Since the universities at Oxford and Cambridge were under the control of the Church of England, James insisted on the appointment of a Bishop at Oxford, who was Catholic at heart, to the presidency of one of the Oxford colleges. This decision put him at odds with the Colleges, because no one was allowed to teach but a member of the Church of England.

James II announced a Second Declaration of Indulgence in April 1688.[105] All ministers were required to read this Indulgence in their churches for two successive Sundays, but they refused, except four clergymen. Even with the four that read, their congregations got up and left the house as soon as the reading began. Seven bishops drafted a petition to request that the King not enforce his order. James declared that the petition was rebellion, and he then arrested the bishops and confined them in the Tower.

The trial of the bishops occurred on June 29, 1688. The judges were chosen by the king to secure a conviction. But the jury would not bring in a guilty verdict. Immediately, the people at Westminster set up a shout, and the crowd in the street echoed it. As a result of this action on the part of James, he lost the friendship of nine-tenths of his people, even his own children and relatives.[106] His days were numbered. Shortly thereafter, he fled to France, never again to set foot on English soil. The throne was declared vacant. The belief that the king received his power directly from God was overthrown with James. With the election of William of Orange (1689-1702) and Mary II (1689-1694), the source of power was restored to the people.

William of Orange (1689-1702) and Mary (1689-1694)

William of Orange and Mary II[107] were invited by many English nobles to become king and queen to save the liberties and rights of the people. Before they were crowned, that had to agree to a Declaration of Rights[108] drawn up by the Parliament to protect the liberties of the people. In 1689, William was compelled to accept the Bill of Rights and to approve the Toleration Act.[109] The new rulers had to agree to abide by the old laws and customs of England. Their predecessors had abolished laws without the consent of Parliament. The new Declaration set forth the doctrine that no king could ever again set aside the laws of England without the authority of Parliament. The king and queen agreed to a number of provisions. These provisions were later made into the Bill of Rights. This Bill is the third great document in the English constitution. The other two documents were the Magna Charta[110] and the Petition of Rights.

This Act was not total toleration for the various religious sects. For example, the Act did not provide toleration for Catholics and Unitarians to worship in their own churches. The oath of supremacy was still required of all clergy in the Established Church. Through the alliance of parson and quire, however, thought-control remained in the villages. These groups hated the Act of Toleration because this allowed men to avoid going to church. Although dissenters were legally free to worship, nevertheless, they were not allowed to attend the universities. To

compensate for this denial of access to the approved universities by the government, the dissenters multiplied academies rapidly.[111]

Hill says, "The Toleration Act of 1689 finally killed the old conception of a single state Church of which all Englishmen were members."[112] Prior to this piece of legislation, there was discussion of broadening the Church of England in order to include Presbyterians, the most conservative of the dissenters. Also, in 1662, 1672, 1687, and 1688 bids (Declaration of Indulgence) were made to support those who were cut off from the state church. But these Declarations were designed to restore the Catholics to political positions, which Charles II (1660-1685) and James II (1685-1688) favored.[113] Locke (1632-1704) favored toleration. In fact, he wrote his *Letter Concerning Toleration* in 1689. Still his views did not allow toleration for Catholics and atheists. He also maintained in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), according to Hill, that certain individuals must be told what to think.[114]

COMPARISON BETWEEN JOHN LOCKE AND THOMAS CAMPBELL

In order to fully grasp the mind-set behind Thomas Campbell's now famous motto, one must understand the mind-set of John Locke as he/she seeks to unravel the intent behind Campbell's cliché. An understanding of the political and religious history before and during the time of Locke accounts for Locke's tone of toleration. An examination of Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration* and Campbell's *Declaration and Address* reveals the thought patterns that permeated both men. Both men wrote against the practices of religious intoleration. Both Locke and Campbell sought to apply principles that would bring about unity within the Christian community.

A common practice in the 1600s was to accuse one of heresy when one did not subscribe to the traditions of the state church. This same policy of intoleration for religious differences also existed in Campbell's day. The various warring factions in Campbell's time could not put one to death for refusal to swear an oath to the pronouncements of the church fathers, but, on the other hand, they could exercise the power of excommunication. To set the tone for this comparison between Locke and Campbell, perhaps the following citations from the two men should set the stage for an understanding of the aims of both men toward religious toleration.

A Letter Concerning Toleration	*Declaration and Address*
The toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion, is so agreeable to the Gospel Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of mankind, that it seems monstrous for men to be so blind, as not to perceive the necessity and advantage of it, in so clear a light.[115]	That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be, no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency by the making laws for the Church; nor can anything more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they so observe these commands and ordinances as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be

	made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.[116]

Both men confronted the spirit of intoleration for religious differences. When Christians refused to conform to a particular brand of orthodoxy, then the dissenting parties were branded with the label *heretic*. For one to disagree with the king or with the clergy was tantamount to disagreement with God Himself. In Campbell's era, one's refusal to succumb to a synod or church council amounted to treason against God. An analysis of the proposals set forth by both men should assist Christians today in reestablishing the unity for which Jesus prayed to the Father (**John 17**). Both Locke and Campbell sought to bring about Christian toleration within the existing churches of their own day. The following scrutiny is an investigation of the objectives of Locke and Campbell. In this inquiry between the two men, one can readily grasp the similarity of objectives in their thinking.

Objectives of Locke and Campbell

Locke's date of birth (1632) occurred during the reign of Charles I (1625-1649), which was a time of political and religious upheaval. On the other hand, Thomas Campbell was born (1763), also a time of religious turmoil on every street corner, so to speak. Unlike Locke's political climate—political fighting—Campbell experienced religious infighting within the various sects. For example, shortly after Campbell's arrival in American (1807), he found himself embroiled in an attack from the Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian Church of which he himself belonged. Locke and Campbell felt the blow of separation and its effects upon the Christian community. Both of these men had to grapple with the concept of heresy, as it was loosely unleashed upon an unsuspecting community of God's people.

Heresy: An attitude of the Mind

In order to combat this tossing about of the word *heresy*, both Locke and Campbell spoke of that which is "expressly stated" in the Word of God as the means of determining the actions to be taken toward others. The two men spoke of the existing denominations as the churches of Christ. It had not occurred to either man to identify the particular fellowship of which he was a part as the kingdom of God, thereby excluding all others from a relationship with the resurrected Christ. It is significant that the expression Church of Christ was not employed of a distinctive religious body, but rather this term only signified the body of Christ as a whole. The Church of Christ, as a denomination, did not yet exist. At the time of the writing of the *Declaration and Address*, Campbell was still Presbyterian, even though he had been defrocked.

Beginning with Locke, one observes political and religious intoleration as common as apple pie is today. Not only did this spirit of dogmatism exist within the government against its people, but this narrow-mindedness against freedom of thought also existed within the various militaristic factions within the various groups professing the Christian faith. On the one hand, the government persecuted Christians that did not conform to the state church. On the other hand, some Christians oppressed other Christians when they did not promise allegiance to their meticulous brand of prevailing attitude. "Every one is orthodox to himself," writes Locke.[117] Locke also captures the essence of one-sidedness when he forcefully paints a picture of the horrible conditions of prejudice against other believers: "This narrowness of spirit on all sides has undoubtedly been the principal occasion of our miseries and confusions.[118]

Locke sees Christendom divided. For this reason, he seeks freedom of conscience and freedom of religious expression. In his *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, he aspires to set forth principles upon which denominational infighting may be abolished, which is what both Campbells (Thomas and Alexander) sought to accomplish. To break these barriers of exclusion and persecution erected by government and church, he presented a sprit of toleration, compassion, mercy, open-mindedness, and impartiality based upon the principles laid down by Jesus and the apostles. In Locke's time frame, every individual who refused to conform to the status quo received the critical epithet of *heretic.* In other words, the climate of the day put forth the idea that one is guilty of *heresy* who does not accommodate his/her religious thoughts and actions to the hallowed beliefs of the established church and clergy.

The Church of England is not the only one that enforced conformity on its subjects, but other religious groups also practiced excommunication against those who refused to interpret the Scriptures as their own in-house religious leaders. In order for one to be considered orthodox, one had to conform to the interpretation placed upon God's Word by the preachers and the church. Everyone was considered apostate who declined to kow-tow to the strange and odd interpretations assigned to many Scriptures. The reason for separation from other Christians was based upon the buzzword of the day—*heresy*. This word still sends chills up and down the spines of God's faithful people.

Heresy then, as well as today, was the sin of the day. Heresy was/is associated with belief, which is not its true meaning. Divisiveness is a term that adequately describes the word *heresy*. All were accused of *heresy* that departed from the norm of their unique—only one of its kind—group. Hersey is generally interpreted as a departure from "the faith." But is this meaning the biblical meaning? Since persecution and excommunication centered on this nasty word, then Locke had to deal with the proper significance of the word *heresy* as utilized by the Word of God. In Locke's day, as well as the twenty-first century, this word conveyed/conveys to the average person something of ominous proportions—wrong belief not sanctioned by the Church of England or some other local fellowship of believers with an axe to grind. This philosophy is still prevalent today. Out of the Stone/Campbell Movement, there are approximately twenty-five or more divisions, each of which accuses the other of *heresy*. In other words, *heresy* is holding to a belief that differs from the tradition of an exclusive group.

Locke, in concluding his *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, states: "it may not be amiss to add a few things concerning heresy and schism."[119] He then proposes the scenario that neither a Turk nor a Mohammedan can be classified as a heretic or schismatic. They may, it is true, be considered apostate or infidel, but not heretic or schismatic.[120] He reasons that by this true definition of *heresy*, then, one of different religions (Turks and Christians, for instance, are of different religions) cannot be a heretic or schismatic to the other.[121] Even within Christendom, there may be different denominations—sometimes called, although incorrectly, different religions—such as, Lutherans or Papist, yet both of these denominations profess faith in Christ and are still Christians in the biblical sense. Both denominations are of the same religion—Christianity. Locke asserts that whether one is Lutheran or Papist that both still acknowledge the "Holy Scriptures to be the rule and foundation of their religion."[122]

As a result of these separations into distinct religious bodies, he concludes that both parties are guilty of *heresy* in the biblical sense. Why? Locke bases this understanding upon the biblical meaning of *heresy*, not the meaning in vogue. Both groups were guilty of *heresy*, not because of wrong beliefs, but because of separation, which is the true meaning of *heresy*. Locke recognized that the biblical concept of *heresy* is related to an attitude of the heart, not error of judgment in one's interpretation of Scripture. He cuts away all underbrush as he explains the

"nuts and bolts" of *heresy*: "heresy is a separation made in ecclesiastical communion between men of the same religion, for some opinions no way contained in the rule itself."[123]

Again, he goes right to the core meaning of *heresy:* "heresy is a separation made in their Christian communion for opinions not contained in the express words of Scripture."[124] In other words, *heresy* for Locke centered not on belief, but separation. For Locke, *heresy* had nothing to do with the rightness or wrongness of belief; it is the manifestation of an attitude of the mind toward others; it is the spirit of divisiveness; it is the arrogance of factiousness; it is my way, or no way at all. Yet again, he continues to hammer away the real meaning of *heresy*: "He is only a heretic who divides the church into parts, introduces names and marks of distinction, and voluntarily makes a separation because of such opinions."[125]

Locke zeros in on the word heresy in order to draw attention to what the church is actually guilty of, not individuals that cannot in good conscious subscribe to the dictates of the church. The church is actually guilty of *heresy*, not the individuals condemned by the church. Yet, on the other hand, he also calls attention to individuals who withdraw themselves from other believers who do not profess the same opinions: "When anyone separates himself from the communion of a church, because that church does not publicly profess some certain opinions which the Holy Scriptures do not expressly teach."[126] The following is a lengthy passage from Locke, but it has to be quoted in full:

> For when they have determined the Holy Scriptures to be the only foundation of faith, they nevertheless lay down certain propositions as fundamental, which are not in the Scripture; and because others will not acknowledge these additional opinions of theirs, nor build upon them as if they were necessary and fundamental, they therefore make a separation in the church, either by withdrawing themselves from the others, or expelling the others from them. Nor does it signify any thing for them to say that their confessions and symbols are agreeable to Scripture, and to the analogy of faith: for if they be conceived in the express words of Scripture, there can be no question about them; because those are acknowledged by all Christians to be of divine inspiration, and therefore fundamental. But if they say that the articles which they require to be professed are consequences deduced from the Scripture, it is undoubtedly well done of them to believe and profess such things as seem unto them so agreeable to the rule of faith.[127]

In Locke's political and religious climate, Christians divided over their deductions and inferences from Scriptures. These inferences and deductions were analogous to the Word of God, according to the divines. For example, if one could not subscribe to their conclusions (deductions and inferences), then the dissenters were referred to as heretics. This philosophy of labeling dissenters with the label heretic is still prevalent today. Another term that is employed by many within the Stone/Campbell Restoration Movement is the word *digressive*. This word also conjures up in the mind something that no one wants to be. It runs through the soul like fear of the dreaded virus known as the HIV.

Christians today, as well a in the time of Locke and the Campbells, still bind their inferences (conclusions) and deductions (reasoning) upon other believers as the Word of God. The interpretation of the church leaders—elders and preachers—is still identified as on par with the Word of God. In fact, in the minds of many leaders, their logic and conjectures are equated with the Word itself. For one to dissent from their understanding is tantamount to disagreeing with God Himself. And yet, one must recognize that there is a difference between one's perception of God's Word and the Word itself. Interpretation is one thing and the Word of God is

another thing. Locke, too, writes about the absurdity of any man equating his interpretation with the Word of God:

> I do not think there is any man arrived to that degree of madness, as that he dare give out his consequences and interpretations of Scripture as divine inspiration, and compare the articles of faith, that he has framed according to his own fancy, with the authority of the Scripture.[128]

Heresy and schism come when Christians seek to impose their deductions and inferences upon other Christians. It is true that the discernments and judgments of certain individuals about the Scriptures may, in fact, be the Word of God, yet these differences ought not to be forced upon other believers until they themselves see the connection, and evidently see that they are so, otherwise divisions will continue to occur. With keen insight and discernment, Locke pens the following insightful words to assist individuals in reanalyzing the current position on disagreements:

> This only I say, that however clearly we may think this or the other doctrine to be deduced from Scripture, we ought not therefore to impose it upon others as a necessary article of faith, because we believe it to be agreeable to the rule of faith, unless we would be content also that other doctrines should be imposed upon us in the same manner; and that we should be compelled to receive and profess all the different and contradictory opinions of Lutherans, Calvinists, Remonstrants, Anabaptists, and other sects, which the contrivers of symbols, systems, and confessions, are accustomed to deliver unto their followers as genuine and necessary deductions from the Holy Scripture. I cannot but wonder at the extravagant arrogances of those men who think that they themselves can explain things necessary to salvation more clearly than the Holy Ghost, the eternal and infinite wisdom of God.[129]

The plight of the church today is no different than that which existed in Locke's day. Locke sought to unravel the mystery behind the word *Heresy* through an analysis of the religious intolerance perpetrated upon the dissenters. *Heresy* comes about when other believers impose their interpretation or opinion upon others as articles of faith. Both Thomas and Alexander Campbell, the founders of the denominational church known as the Churches of Christ, Christian Church, and the Disciples of Christ, confronted the religious world for its divisive spirit over deductions and inferences. The imposition of creeds with its judgments and decisions as equivalent to the Word of God upon Thomas Campbell (1763-1854), father of Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), is what catapulted the Campbell Movement, which later merged with the Stone Movement initiated by Barton Stone (1772-1844).

Shortly after Thomas Campbell's arrival to America, the Presbyterian Synod accepted him, but, six months after his coming, he found himself in trouble with the Presbyterian Synod. He was accused of offering the communion to other Presbyterians who were not of his faction. He was defrocked by the Synod; thus, on September 13, 1808, he became an independent preacher with no denominational affiliations.[130] When the Synod defrocked Thomas Campbell for offering the communion to other Presbyterians not of their own particular molds, the Synod revoked his license to preach. In response to the sectarian spirit of the Synod, he wrote his *Declaration and Address* (1809). Campbell, also, addressed the issues of inferences and deductions, which many ecclesiastical structures made obligatory upon other Christians. He, like Locke, paints a graphic picture of misuse of inferences and deductions as a bond of Christian unity:

> 6. That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally

> binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession.[131]

Campbell stresses that deductions and inferences from Scripture premises have no place in the Christian community, but rather belong to the progressive edification of the church. If one accepts the deductions and inferences of another person without confirmation in his/her own mind, then, one's belief is not in the Word of God, but rather one's faith is in the interpreter of the Word. Locke also writes the same sentiments about binding deductions and inferences upon other Christians: "Now nothing in worship or discipline can be necessary to Christian communion, but what Christ our legislator, or the apostles, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have commanded in express words."[132] This quote from Locke also mirrors the thought pattern in Campbell's Article Six, as cited above.

Alexander Campbell, son of Thomas, twenty-one years after the writing of the now famous document, writes in the same vein: "I will now show how they cannot make a sect of us. We will acknowledge all as Christians who acknowledge the gospel facts, and obey Jesus Christ."[133] Later, in 1835, Alexander Campbell addresses the charge of heresy imposed upon other believers who could not assent to the whims of would-be-interpreters. He captures in graphic language the dilemma of Christians who refuse to kow-tow to the supposed individuals who possess greater knowledge of the Word:

> Indeed, in most cases where proscription and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy, (of which, however, for consistency's sake, he must be accused,) is, in truth, the real cause of separation.[134]

Both father and son understood the logic of John Locke. These three men grasped the concept that one is guilty of *heresy* when he/she becomes factious. It is in this same vein that Leroy Garrett goes right to the heart of the controversy when he writes:

> There is no necessary relation between heresy and doctrine, whether the doctrine be sound or unsound. Heresy is not wrong opinion or false teaching. We affirm that heresy can exist today and did exist in the primitive church quite apart from any erroneous opinions or false teaching.[135]

The traditions of the church in Locke's day, as well in the Campbells' day, made it difficult, if not impossible, to read the Word of God without blinders. It goes almost without saying that not all "plain teaching" is equally plain to all. Once more Garrett writes:

> And so with the philosophers: Socrates was poisoned, Aristotle exiled, Spinoza excommunicated, Brunno burned alive. Their heresy was that they dared to think for themselves. History teaches us that cultures have rewarded nonconformity with reprisal; it has always been a sin to be different.[136]

Another quote from Locke on heresy expresses the sentiments expressed by Thomas Campbell many years later:

> For if they be conceived in the express words of Scripture, there can be no question about them; because those are acknowledged by all Christians to be of divine inspiration, and therefore fundamental. But if they say that the articles which they require to be professed are consequences deduced from the Scripture, it is undoubtedly well done of them to believe and profess such things as seem unto them so agreeable to the rule of faith; but it would be very ill done to obtrude those things upon others, unto whom they do not seem to be the indubitable doctrines of the Scriptures.

The phrase "express words of Scripture" permeated the writings of Locke as well as Campbell's *Declaration and Address.* Campbell picked-up on this phraseology and employed this concept to respond to the Presbyterian Synod in defense of his actions concerning the communion. The following analysis seeks to explore more fully the employment of this phrase in their reactions to the sectarian spirit of the age within which they all lived.

The Phrase: "Express Words of Scripture"

The phrase, "express words of Scripture", or similar expressions, occurs frequently in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* by Locke[137] and the *Declaration and Address* by Campbell.[138] A cursory reading of both documents reveal that Locke and Campbell sought to convey the central thrust of unity within the various denominations. Unless God expressly states that something is to be done or not to be done, then, Christians ought not to bind their opinions upon other believers to admission into the church of Christ. Locke expressly states that

> I would ask them here . . . , if it be not more agreeable to the church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the holy Scriptures declared in express words, to be necessary to salvation? I ask, I say, whether this be not more agreeable to the church of Christ, than for men to impose their own inventions and interpretations upon others, as if they were of divine authority; and to establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of Christianity such things as the holy Scriptures do either not mention, are at least not expressly command? Whoever requires those things in order to ecclesiastical communion, which Christ does not require in order to life eternal, he may perhaps indeed constitute a society accommodated to his own opinion, and his own advantage; but how that can be called the church of Christ, which is established upon laws that are not his, and which excludes such persons from its communion as he will one day receive into the kingdom of heaven. I understand not.[139]

This lack of "expressly stated" is what caused Campbell to offer the communion to other Presbyterians. He maintained that unless the Word of God expressly prohibited his allowing other believers from other factions within the Presbyterian Church to commune with them (also Presbyterians), then he would not refuse the Lord's Supper to Christians in other fellowships. When Campbell wrote Article Three in his *Declaration and Address*, he objected to making anything an article of faith not expressly taught in the Word of God:

> That in order to do this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the Word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of Divine obligation, in their Church constitution and management, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament Church; either in express terms or by approved precedent.[140]

This essay reinforces the motive behind the motto that Thomas Campbell coined to express his sentiments about fellowship within the various denominations, which he called

churches of Christ. Campbell confronted head-on the same sectarian attitude that Locke faced in his day. Locke, for instance, in his *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, addressed the government with its state church as well as the warring factions within the respective denominations. On the other hand, Campbell went to the jugular vein of fractiousness on the part of those who considered themselves as the only orthodox ones. Campbell did not have to contend with government, only divided Christendom. He draws attention to the paralyzing evils of division when he writes Article Eleven in his *Declaration and Address*:

> That division among Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is antichristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is antiscriptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command. It is antinatural, as it excites Christians to contemn [scorn—RDB], to hate, and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work.[141]

Division in Campbell's day, as well as this century, proliferated when Christians sought to bind their inferences and deductions upon other Christians. Salvation was made contingent upon absolute perfection in knowledge. Campbell sought to point out that an all-out perfection in understanding of divine Scripture is not prerequisite to salvation. No one possesses complete insight of Holy Scripture. Within the Christian community, one observes infants, children, young men, and fathers. Knowledge is a growth process. Campbell grasped the significance of mental levels with the kingdom when he penned Article Seven:

> That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes, the better, yet, as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the Church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the Church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.[142]

Thomas Campbell's son, Alexander Campbell, also criticized the practice of making deductions of some great mind as the criterion by which Christians accept other Christians: "Men have foolishly attempted to make the deductions of some great minds the common measure of all Christians."[143] He goes on record as one who never made his deductions a prerequisite for fellowship. One should observe carefully his own succinct statement about his own practice toward those who do not possess the same opinion as his: "I never did, at any time, exclude a man from the kingdom of God for a mere imbecility [irrationality, RDB] of intellect; or, in other words, because he could not assent to our opinions. All sects are doing this, or have done this."[144] It is significant that both father and son understood that the

> Grandeur, sublimity, and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this, that THE BELIEF OF ONE FACT, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of this ONE FACT, and submission to ONE INSTITUTION expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.[145]

It is in this same vein of the Campbells that Locke (120 years before Thomas Campbell wrote the *Declaration and Address*) stresses that "Nobody is obliged . . . to yield obedience unto the admonitions or injunctions of another, farther than he himself is persuaded."[146] It appears from Locke's writings that he was familiar with the apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans. In the Roman letter, one cannot but help reflect upon Paul's admonition to the church when controversy erupted over doctrinal issues that did not undermine the one foundation of Christianity, namely, Jesus. Paul writes: "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (**Romans 14:5**). One cannot submit to the belief of another without conviction in his/her own mind; otherwise, one's faith is not in the Word of God, but in an individual.

One cannot read the writings of Locke without a consciousness of his familiarity of Paul's writings. For instance, Paul, in this same epistle, writes: "But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin" (**14:23**). Once more, Paul nails the coffin shut on this issue of intoleration when he castigates individuals who wished to enforce unity in conformity. Paul questions the believers in Rome who wish to make their conclusions the means of "right standing" before God. The fourteenth chapter of Romans reveals that the church was up in arms over the eating or not eating of meats. Some were mistaken about the eating of meats and others were wrong. But, for Paul, whether one was right or wrong was not the real issue at stake. The subject was unity within the body of Christ, not splitting up.

Again, Paul poses the following question: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" (**14:4a**). But Paul did not stop with that question, but rather he proposed an answer from God's perspective: "To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (**14:4b**). Having reflected upon Paul's admonition, one should now reflect upon Locke's response to differences within the church, which also was based upon Romans 14:

> Yet if I be not thoroughly persuaded thereof in my own mind, there will be no safety for me in following it. No way whatsoever that I shall walk in against the dictates of my conscience, will ever bring me to the mansions of the blessed. . . . Faith only, and inward sincerity, are the things that procure acceptance with God.[147]

In harmony with Holy Scripture, Locke, and both Campbells, set forth the teachings about "unity in diversity" as enunciated by the Holy Spirit. Alexander Campbell, for instance, sets forth the views advocated by his father in the *Declaration and Address*:

> So long as unity of opinion was regarded as a proper basis of religious union, so long have mankind been distracted by the multiplicity and variety of opinions. To establish what is called a system of orthodox opinions as the bond of union was, in fact, offering a premium for new diversities in opinion, and was increasing, *ad infinitum*, opinions, sects, and divisions. And what was worse than all, it was establishing self-love and pride as religious principles, as fundamental to salvation, for a love regulated by

similarity of opinion, is only a love to one's own opinion; and all the zeal exhibited in the defense of it, is but the pride of opinion.[148]

The amount of time and space taken here to compare Locke and Thomas Campbell is easily justifiable. The problems in Locke's day, as well as Campbell's day, encapsulate the warp and woof of the continuing controversy as it has come down to Christians within the Churches of Christ, the Christian Churches, and the Disciples of Christ. As one reflects upon the divisions today within the various religious denominations, one should, once more, turn to Locke for another insightful note on how to maintain unity within the true church:

> But since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would only ask them here by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the holy Scriptures declared in express words, to be necessary to salvation? I ask, I say, whether this be not more agreeable to the church of Christ, than for men to impose their own inventions and interpretations upon others, as if they were of divine authority; and to establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of Christianity such things as the holy Scriptures do either not mention, or at least not expressly command? Whosoever requires those things in order to ecclesiastical communion, which Christ does not require in order to life eternal, he may perhaps indeed constitute a society accommodated to his own opinion, and his own advantage; but how that can be called the church of Christ, which is established upon laws that are not his, and which excludes such persons from its communion as he will one day receive into the kingdom of heaven, I understand not.[149]

Just a casual reading of this citation from Locke, one recognizes the same thought patterns in the thinking of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. All three men advocated unity based upon acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord in one's life, not correct intellectual understanding. Locke also addresses the whims of presenting one's own views as the culmination and embodiment of THE TRUTH. He pens: "For every church is orthodox to itself; to others, erroneous or heretical. Whatever any church believes, it believes to be true; and the contrary thereunto it pronounces to be error."[150] These men had to combat the belief that error, in and of itself, automatically condemns one's soul.

These reformers were conscious that even though one may be in error, one must also recognize that not all error will condemn one's soul, else no one could be saved. Also, they had to face the fact that even though all truth is truth, nevertheless, all truth is not essential to salvation, else not one could be saved. These men were mindful that God had never made absolute freedom from error in intellect a condition of salvation, nor had He made possession of absolute truth essential to eternal life. If so, then no one could be saved. What does matter, at least, according to Paul, is whether one loves God or not:

> Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. 3 But the man who loves God is known by God (**1 Corinthians 8:1-**3).

As one reviews history beginning with Locke until the present era, one discovers that history repeats itself over and over again. Divisions always come when men seek to impose their views upon others. In the 1600s, men imposed their views upon others, and, as a result, Christians refused communion with other believers; in the 1800s, the same mindset prevailed—the command of conformity. In the 1900s, division among Christians proliferated up-and-down

the landscape. In the 1950s, this author became a part of one of the most dogmatic groups in the religious world. This movement has since divided many times within its own ranks. Why? Unity in conformity, not unity in diversity, is the battle cry of this war-torn movement. Alexander Campbell, in trying to stay the tide of factiousness, captures the essence of the problem for all times when he writes:

> The New Testament was not designed to occupy the same place in theological seminaries that the carcasses of malefactors are condemned to occupy in medical hall —first doomed to the gibbet, and then to the dissecting knife of the spiritual anatomist. Christianity consists infinitely more in good words than in sound opinion.[151]

Again, Campbell zeros in on the truth that opinions can never unite, but only divide. Listen as he seeks to bring individuals to an awareness of the part that opinions play in the breaking up of the body of Christ into pieces:

> But men cannot give up their opinions, and, therefore, they never can unite, says one. We do not ask them to give up their opinions; we ask them only not to impose them upon others. Let them hold their opinion; but let them hold them as private property. The faith is public property; opinions are, and always have been, private property.[152]

Locke, Thomas and Alexander Campbell frequently employed the expression, "expressly stated," or some closely synonymous worded phrase to convey the basic concept of binding or not binding upon other Christians one's opinions.

Churches of Christ and Their Basic Presuppositional Misunderstanding of the Nature of the Church

C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes express in concrete language the major fallacy that exists today in the Stone/Campbell Movement. The following analysis summarizes the current status of thinking in this much divided movement today:

> We also face an additional obstacle stemming from our heritage among Churches of Christ. We often have assumed that our roots are simply in the New Testament and that we really have not been shaped in any significant way by the intervening history. We assume that our churches are simply New Testament churches, nothing more and nothing less. The sects and denominations of Protestantism may be products of history, but our origins come entirely from the Bible. The implications of such an assumption are clear; the recent past has scant value in clarifying who we are and from whence we have come.[153]

The denominational Church of Christ just assumes that its roots go all the way back to the day of Pentecost. But the truth of the matter is, there were no Churches of Christ in existence until the times of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. It is true that the church of Christ was in existence, but not the Church of Christ Church. In fact, even Locke employed the expression church of Christ in the 1600s, but the Church of Christ Church did not come into existence until the early part of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Stone and the Campbells.

The Churches of Christ, as a whole, are fond of using the term *denomination* to distinguish its movement from other movements. One way in which the Churches of Christ seek to widen the gulf between themselves and other denominations is to assign the epithet—The

Lord's Church, whereby they assign all other fellowships belonging to Christ to an eternal burning hell. What does the word *denomination* mean? Basically, the word simply means to give a name to. In other words, any time one designates a particular religious group by a different name to distinguish it from other religious groups, then, that body is a denomination, even if it is the Churches of Christ.

As far as this writer knows, there were no congregations that used the term church of Christ in a denominational sense in the days of Locke or even the Campbells. Prior to the time of Locke, when Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the cathedral at Wittenberg in 1577, the Church of Christ as a distinctive religious body did not exist. This is not to deny that Christ's church (assembly or community) did not live (exist), but rather that the specific organization known as the Church of Christ did not bodily inhale or exhale—it had no reality. Again, one might also inquire as to where the Church of Christ Church was when Pope Urban II (1041-1099) launched his First Crusade beginning in 1059 CE? Many believers, apparently, think that the term Church of Christ has always existed upon the lips of its adherents. The religious body of people today known as the Churches of Christ did not exist until the time of Alexander and Thomas Campbell.

There is nothing wrong with the expression church of Christ if one uses the expression to refer to the body of Christ as a whole—His universal church. Locke's (1632-1704) *A Letter of Toleration* reveals his concept of the true church of Christ. One finds that he employs the familiar phrase in the sense of God's community of believers, not a distinctive religious body of believers. He writes:

> But since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would only ask them here by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the holy Scriptures declared in express words, to be necessary to salvation? I ask, I say, whether this be not more agreeable to the church of Christ, than for men to impose their own inventions and interpretations upon others, as if they were of divine authority; and to establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of Christianity such things as the holy Scriptures do not either not mention, or at least not expressly command? Whoever requires those things in order to ecclesiastical communion, which Christ does not require in order to life eternal, he may perhaps indeed constitute a society accommodate to his own opinion, and his own advantage; but how that can be called the church of Christ, from its communion as he will one day receive into the kingdom of heaven, I understand not.[154]

Even though Locke wrote the above excerpt over three hundred years ago, nevertheless, he still captures the essence of a trustworthy church of Christ. When he speaks of the church of Christ, he does not have reference to a single body by that name. In fact, there was no such denominational group known as the Church of Christ. Whether one was Catholic or Protestant, one was still a member of the church of Christ. Locke, for example, belonged the Anglican Church (Church of England). He, nevertheless, confronted the religious establishment for its factional way of thinking toward other believers. In his day many Christians did not exhibit the general feeling of open-mindedness for disagreement with the basic doctrines of the church. In other words, one had to belong to a particular sect. This narrow attitude about the nature of the church brought about persecution. As a result of this fanatic atmosphere, Locke addressed himself to the marks of a genuine church of Christ:

> Since you are pleased to inquire what are my thoughts about the mutual toleration of Christians in their different professions of religion, I must needs answer you freely, that I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true church. For

> whatsoever some people boast of the antiquity of places and names, or of the pomp of their outward worship; others, of the reformation of their discipline; all, of the orthodoxy of their faith, for every one is orthodox to himself: these things, and all others of this nature, are much rather marks of men's striving for power and empire over one another, than of the church of Christ. Let any one have ever so true a claim to all these things, yet if he be destitute of charity, meekness, and good will in general towards all mankind, even to those that are not Christians, he is certainly yet short of being a true Christian himself.[155]

Once more, Locke sets forth the characteristic measure of a true-blue church of Christ. The mark of the true church of Christ is the spirit of toleration. He shuttered at the remedy in his day for lack of conformity to established ecclesiastical organizations—fire and sword. It was agree or die. In the twenty-first century, it is no longer the stake with flames engulfing the body, but, today, one's refusal to conform to the whims of ecclesiastical organizations, elders, and preachers result in excommunication. Locke understood what many in this day have not yet grasped—men/women can no more all think alike than they can all look alike. Yet, in Locke's day also, many did not comprehend this basic concept in intellectual attainments. He penetrates into the very heart of the matter when he writes:

> That any man should think fit to cause another man, whose salvation he heartily desires, to expire in torments, and that even in an unconverted estate, would, I confess, seem very strange to me, and, I think, to any other also. But nobody, surely, will ever believe that such a carriage maintain that men ought to be compelled by fire and sword to profess certain doctrines, and conform to this or that exterior worship, without any regard had unto their morals; if any one endeavor to convert those that are erroneous unto the faith, by forcing them to profess things that they do not believe, and allowing them to practice things that the Gospel does not permit; it cannot be doubted, indeed, that such a one is desirous to have a numerous assembly joined in the same profession with himself; but that he principally intends by those means to compose a truly Christian church, is altogether incredible. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if those who do not really contend for the advancement of the true religion, and of the church of Christ, make use of arms that do not belong to the Christian warfare.[156]

Locke speaks of the Christian church and the church of Christ in the above quotation; nevertheless, these expressions were not employed in a sectarian fashion. He rebukes the methods employed to bring about conformity within the church. One must be left to his own conscience in his/her application of the Word of God. He also correctly assesses the meaning of the term church of Christ as well as what it is that allows one entrance into the body of Christ. He, with his usual keen insight, captures the biblical concept of the meaning of the English word *church*:

> A Church then I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, is such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls. . . . No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God. The hope of salvation, as it was the only cause of his entrance into that communion, so it can be the only reason of his stay there. For if afterwards he discover any thing either erroneous in the doctrine, or incongruous in the worship of that society to which he has joined himself, why should it not be as free for him to go out as it was to enter? No member of a religious society can be tied with any other bonds but what proceeds from the certain expectation of eternal life. A church then is a society of members voluntarily uniting to this end.[157]

The writings of Locke also agree with Thomas Campbell's understanding of fellowship. Campbell, too, employs the expression Church of Christ (at this time he is still Presbyterian) throughout his now famous document (*Declaration and Address*) to denote the body of Christ (the Christian community) in general. Whether one is Presbyterian or Baptist, this individual is still a member of the church of Christ. A few citations from Campbell's famous document gives credence to this statement. Listen to Campbell as he seeks to set forth the true nature of the church:

> Prop. 1. That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.[158]

It is noteworthy that Campbell uses the expression church of Christ to designate "all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him." At the time he penned these words, the Church of Christ did not exist as a distinct denomination. Just a casual glance of Proposition One reveals that Campbell uses the capitol "C" in speaking of Christians in all the denominations as being in the Church of Christ. Whether one uses the little "c" or the capitol "C" make little material difference. He does not speak of church of Christ in terms of conformity in doctrinal sentiments, but rather of the confession of faith in Christ and holy living as the prerequisites to membership, not perfection in understanding. He understood that the Christian community exists with the various denominations. Thus, he expresses this opinion most forthrightly in his Second Proposition:

> That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.[159]

For Campbell, the Church of Christ exists in distinct religious fellowships. Christ's Church should "walk by the same rule." What he meant by this phrase is that Christians should base their relationship to one another upon one's faith in Jesus and submission to Him in their daily walk with God. He did not mean, as is commonly taught today, unity in conformity on doctrinal matters. Not only did Locke influence Campbell, but Campbell also was influenced by another group of believers who wrote *The First London Confession* in 1664. The following chart gives Campbell's Proposition two, as cited above, and Article XLVII of *The First London Confession* in parallel columns to illustrate Campbell's dependence upon other writings in forming his own conclusions:

Declaration and Address Proposition Two	*The First London Confession* Article XLVII
That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose they ought all to walk	And although the particular Congregations be distinct and several Bodies, every one a compact and knit Citie in it selfe; yet are they all to walk by one and the same Rule, and by all meanes convenient to have the counsel and help one of another in all needful affaires of the church, as members

by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment	of one body in the common faith under Christ their only head.[160]

One cannot read the second document (*The First London confession*) without assigning conscious copying on the part of Campbell in composing his own *Declaration and Address*. Both documents speak of the Church of Christ existing in "particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another." Campbell as well as the Baptists believed that all that profess faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things were a part of the Church of Christ, even though the denominational Church of Christ did not have its existence at the time both documents were written. One surmises from Campbell's document that he never entertained the idea that he was not a member of the Church of Christ, even though he was Presbyterian. In harmony with the gist of the *Declaration and Address*, his son, Alexander, advanced the same mental concept of the church. Listen to Alexander as he writes about his own movement, thirty-two years after his father's famous document, to Andrew Broaddus:

> Whenever the history of this effort at reformation shall have been faithfully written, it will appear, we think, bright as the sun, that our career has been marked with a spirit of forbearance, moderation, and love of union, with an unequivocal desire for preserving the integrity, harmony, and co-operation of all who teach one faith, one Lord, and one immersion. In Confirmation of this fact I am happy to add that no Baptist of good character for piety and morality, has ever been, because of a diverse theory or opinion, excluded from our communion or communities. If divisions then exist, we presume the crime of making them will not lie upon us; unless the declaration of an opinion, the affirmation of a particular view, or the correction of an error in doctrine, discipline, or government, be tantamount to making a party. I may add, in farther corroboration of our anti-sectarian character and feelings now, that, under the blessing of Heaven, a very large party has been formed, in many regions equaling any other denominations; and in others, where we have had an equal ratio of preachers, surpassing them in number; we, as a denomination, are as desirous as ever to unite and co-operate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant.[161]

Alexander Campbell expresses the sentiments set forth in his father's Magna Charta for the new reformation movement. Thomas Campbell attached an appendix to explain in greater details the ramifications of his startling document. In his "Appendix," he addresses Christians in other "distinct bodies" as brethren, which is what his son also wrote about in his letter to Broaddus. The following is a sampling of Thomas Campbell's benevolent spirit he manifested toward those whose opinions differed from his understanding: (1) "It remains with our brethren";[162] "This, we are persuaded, is the uniform sentiment of real Christians of every denomination";[163] and (3) "Let none imagine, that in so saying, we arrogate to ourselves a degree of intelligence superior to our brethren."[164] These excerpts from his "Appendix" illustrate the discernment that Campbell manifested toward those of other denominations. He alleged in his explanation of his famous document that believers in other denominations were Christians. One cannot help but observe the candidness of Campbell as he reflected upon the unity of the church:

> As to creeds and confessions, although we may appear to our brethren to oppose them, yet this is to be understood only in so far as they oppose the unity of the Church, by containing sentiments not expressly revealed in the word of God; or, by the way of using them, become the instruments of a human or implicit faith, or oppress the weak of God's heritage. . . . Our intention, therefore, with respect to all the Churches of Christ is perfectly amicable.[165]

Both Thomas Campbell and John Locke understood the biblical concept of unity. Both men were conscious of Christian unity and religious affiliation within the various religious bodies (denominations). In respect to differences, Campbell wrote: "We ought not to reject him because he cannot see with our eyes as to matters of human inference, of private judgment."[166] Again he composes the following scenario concerning error and the church: "Do we not conclude that the person's error cuts him off from all ordinary possibility of salvation, by thus cutting him off from a place in the church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation[167] For Campbell, error in interpretation of Scripture did not negate a person from belonging to the Church of Christ. What is unity based upon? Listen to Campbell as he, once more, articulates concisely his thoughts concerning his perception of Christian fellowship:

> By the Christian Church throughout the world, we mean the aggregate of such professors as we have described in Propositions 1 and 8, pages 48 and 50, even all that mutually acknowledge each other as Christians, upon the manifest evidence of their faith, holiness, and charity. It is such only we intend when we urge the necessity of Christian unity.[168]

CONCLUSION

Both Locke and Campbell consider the existing denominations as the Church of Christ. This concept serves to deliver believers from the mistaken idea that the Church is something people attend or that it is an ecclesiastical organization. The church is the people, not an establishment. Simply calling one by the name Church of Christ does not, in and of itself, constitute a true Church of Christ. There is no such thing as the Baptist Church or the Presbyterian Church or the Methodist Church or the Church of Christ; there is only one church (body of Christ) and that church consists of all who have put their faith or trust in the savior of the world—Jesus the Messiah.

When Campbell initiated this famous slogan—We Speak Where the Bible Speaks—he did not intend to say that one must give book, chapter, and verse for everything one does. He primarily meant that he would not refuse the communion to other Presbyterians unless the Bible strictly forbade such actions. Thus, Campbell, when called upon the carpet for his ecumenical spirit, coined the phrase to mean: Unless the Bible forbids the actions that you condemn (the Synod), then I will speak where the Bible speaks and I will be silent where the Bible is silent. In other words, if the Bible outlaws my offering the communion to other Presbyterians that are not a part of our orthodox group, then I will withhold the communion. If the Bible is mute about this issue, then I will not refuse the communion to other believers.

In brining this essay to its conclusion, this author cites Alexander Campbell's remarks about John Locke:

> The celebrated John Locke, for fourteen or fifteen years, applied himself closely to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and employed the last period of his life scarcely in any thing else. He was never weary of admiring the grand view of that sacred book, and the just relations of all its parts. He every day made discoveries in it, which gave him fresh cause of admiration. And so earnest was he for the comfort of his friends, and the diffusion of sacred knowledge amongst them, that even the day before he died he particularly exhorted all about him to read the Holy Scriptures. His well-known recommendation to a person who asked him which was the shortest and surest way for a young gentleman to attain to the true knowledge of the Christian religion, in the full and just extent of it, was—"Let him study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New

Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It hath God for its author—Salvation for its end—and Truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."[169]

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[1] Robert Stein, *difficult Sayings in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 36-37.

[2] Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Indiana: Religious Book Service, 1897), Vol., 1: 237.

[3] Leroy Garrett, "The Motto That Got Us In Trouble," *Restoration Review* 34 (March 1992): 253.

[4] William Herbert Hanna, *Biography of Thomas Campbell Advocate of Christian Union*, reprint (Joplin, MO: College Press, nd), 45.

[5] Ibid., 32.

[6] Ibid., 32.

[7] Ibid., 50-51. *Sine qua non*: means an essential element or condition.

[8] Ibid., 106.

[9] Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three* Churches (Joplin, MO.: College Press, 1981), 141.

[10] Defrocked: to deprive of the right to practice a profession.

[11] Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Religious book Service, 1897), 1:231.

[12] Ibid., 1:232.

[13] Ibid., 1:237.

[14] Ibid., 1:232.

[15] Alexander Campbell, "Millennium—No. II," *Millennial Harbinger* (Bethany, VA: Editor, 1830; reprint, Joplin, MO: College Press, 1987): 145-146.

[16] Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1:237. See also Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, 142-143.

[17] Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, 143.

[18] See Leonard C. Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1988) for an excellent survey of the Reformed tradition under the leadership of Zwingli and other reformers.

[19] Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1: 238.

[20] Ibid., 1:240.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Harris Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 4.

[23] Hanna, *Biography of Thomas Campbell Advocate of Christian Union*, 118.

[24] Thomas Campbell, "Declaration and Address," in C. A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, reprint (Joplin: College Press, 1985), 110.

[25] The Appendix is an explanation of the *Declaration and Address*. In order to understand clearly the meanings of certain phrases in the *Declaration and Address*, one must read the Appendix.

[26] In the Appendix, one finds undenominational expressions saturating its entire contents; for example, consider the following: "assure our brethren" (p. 128), "with respect to all the Churches of Christ" (P. 131), "to our brethren" (p. 131), "our brother" (p. 137), Christian brethren" (p. 149), "our fellow-Christians" (151), "toward a Christian brother" (p. 156), "acknowledged brother" (p. 156), "our oppressed fellow Christian" (p. 157), "a fellow-Christian (p. 158), "our brethren" (p. 159), "acknowledge each other as Christians" (p. 161). It is significant that Campbell recognized the Presbyterians as brethren at the time of the writing of the *Declaration and Address*.

[27] Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, 110.

[28] Ibid., 133-134.

[29] Ibid., 35.

[30] Alexander Campbell, "The Foundation of Hope, and of Christian Union," *Christian Baptist* 1 (April 1824): 176.

[31] Ibid., 178.

[32] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 60.

[33] The following is an interesting note on the life of John Locke, found in Elizabeth Livingstone, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 306-307, where it is stated:

> Locke was the foremost defender of free inquiry and toleration in the later 17th cent. In the *Letters Concerning Toleration* (1689, 1690, and 1692) he pleaded for religious toleration for all except atheists and RCs whom he excluded as a danger to the State.

[34] Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Three Essential Books in One Volume: The God Who Is There, Escape from Reason, His Is There and He Is Not Silent* (Illinois: Crossway, 1990), 208.

[35] Ibid., 211.

[36] See Livingstone, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 527, where the *Act of Uniformity* is defined:

> "UNIFORMITY, Acts of. (1) The 1549 Act imposed the exclusive use of the first Book of Common Prayer in all public services and laid down penalties for holders of benefices who failed to comply. (2) The 1552 Act ordered the use of the revised BCP, of that year. Absence from church was punishable by ecclesiastical censure, and attendance at other forms of service by imprisonment. (3) The 1559 Act ordered the use of the 1552 BCP, with slight modifications. Absence from church was now punishable by a fine. (4) The 1662 Act required that all ministers should publicly assent to the 1662 BCP and ordered its exclusive use. Ministers not episcopally ordained were to be deprived. Some 2000 Presbyterian ministers who refused to conform were ejected from their livings.

[37] See "Henry VIII," in Livingstone, Ibid., 236.

[38] For complete documentation, see Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), s.v. "The Act of the Six Articles, 1539," 222-232.

[39] Ibid.

[40] In addition to his marriage to Anne Boleyn, between 1533 and his death in 1547, Henry also married Jane Seymour (1536), Anne of Cleves (1540), and Catherine Parr (1543).

[41] Harmon B. Niver, *A School History of England* (New York: American Book Company, 1904), 169. See also Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation*, s.v. "The Then Articles, 1536," 162-174.

[42] Niver, *A School History of England*, 171.

[43] Ibid. 172.

[44] See Bray, "The Ten Articles, 1536," in *Documents of the English Reformation*, 162-174.

[45] Niver, *A School History of England*, 172.

[46] Ibid., 175. Today, the clergy in the Church of England are required to affirm only a general assent.

[47] Ibid., 180.

[48] Ibid., 133.

[49] See Elgin Moyer, *Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, revised and enlarged by Earle E. Cairns (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 441-442.

[50] See Livingston, "Cranmer, Thomas (1480-1556)," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian* Church, 135, where he writes:

> He was partly responsible for the Ten Articles and for the dissemination of the Bible in the vernacular. After Henry's death (1547) Cranmer was one of the most influential counselors of Edward VI, and his ideas developed in an increasingly Protestant direction. He was also largely responsible for the abolition of the old Church ceremonies, for the destruction of images, for the BCP of 1549 and that of 1552, as well as for the Forty-Two articles. On the accession of Mary (1553), he was accused of treason, tried and sentenced, but the Queen spared his life. He was, however, imprisoned, tried for heresy, and degraded. He made several recantations but renounced them and was burnt at the stake.

[51] Ibid., 120, "Common Prayer, Book," where he writes:

> The first BCP was issued in 1549 and its use ordered by the first Act of Uniformity. In doctrine and ritual it was a compromise between the old and new schools and pleased neither. Revision in the light of Protestant criticism led to the issue of the Second BCP in 1552. After the reign of Mary, this was reissued, with a few alterations, as the Elizabethan BCP 1559, to which the Ornaments Rubric was attached. After The Restoration, the 1662 Act of Uniformity authorized a BCP revised by Convocation. The most important change was the introduction of the AV for the Epistles and Gospels. This 1662 Book remained almost unchanged until modern times.

[52] Ibid., 183.

[53] Ibid., 184, 191, 194.

[54] Ibid., 204. Also, see Hall and Albion and Pope, *A History of England and the Empire-Commonwealth* (Lexington: Xerox College Publishing, 1971), 220.

[55] See Hall and Albion and Pope, *A History of England and the Empire-Commonwealth*, 221.

[56] See Livingston, "Vestirian Controversy, The," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 536-537, where he says:

A dispute about clerical dress which began under Edward VI and under Elizabeth I became one of the foundations of the Puritan party. The question became acute in 1550, when John Hooper, nominated BP of Gloucester, at first refused to be consecrated in the surplice (a loose white liturgical garment with wide sleeves—RDB) and rochet (a white linen vestment with tight sleeves worn by bishops—RDB) prescribed by the BCP. After Elizabeth's accession to the restoration of vestments in the Chapel Royal excited opposition. M. Parker's Advertisements (1566) required the use of a surplice in parish churches and a cope (a semicircular cloak worn at liturgical functions in the W. Church when the chasuble [that is, the outer garment worn by bishops and priests when celebrating the Eucharist is used—RDB). London clergy refused compliance and were deprived. Serious disturbances followed.

[57] See Niver, *A School History of England*, 203-213.

[58] See Gustavus S. Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 2, where he calls attention to the Catholics and Puritans and Anglicans as they were at each other's throats:

The Puritans . . . opposed Sabbath breaking and the keeping of the other holy days, baptism by women in their homes, display of the cross in baptism, bowing at the name of Jesus, and other practices considered high church or popish.

[59] Cited in Ira Maurice Price, *The ancestry of Our English Bible* (: New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 269.

[60] Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version*, 1.

[61] Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, 271.

[62] See F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English* (: New York: Oxford University press, 1978), 98.

[63] The first great document to be signed by a king was the Great Charter, or Magna Charta, which became the foundation stone of English liberty. This document contained provisions for the protection of life, liberty, and property. The English barons forced king John (1199-1216) to sign this document. Prior to this document, John took away property from his subjects by force, got rid of his opponents by poison and secret assassination. Many were thrown into prison and left to starve, never being brought to trial for their pretended offenses.

[64] See Niver, *A School History of England*, 216-217.

[65] See Livingstone, "Uniformity, Acts of," *The Concise Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*, 527, where he describes in detail the Act of Uniformity:

(1) The 1549 Act imposed the exclusive use of the first Book of Common Prayer in all public services and laid down penalties for holders of benefices who failed to comply. (2) The 1552 Act ordered the use of the revised BCP of that year. Absence from church was punishable by ecclesiastical censure, and

attendance at other forms of service by imprisonment. (3) The 1559 Act ordered the use of the 1552 BCP, with slight modifications. Absence from church was now punishable by a fine. (4) The 1662 Act required that all ministers should publicly assent to the 1662 BCP and ordered its exclusive use. Ministers not episcopally ordained were to be deprived. Some 2,000 Presbyterian ministers who refused to conform were ejected from their livings.

[66] See Niver, *A School History of England*, 219.

[67] See Robert A. Baker, *A Summary of Christian History*, revised by John M. Landers (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 251.

[68] Ibid., 252.

[69] Ibid., 280.

[70] See Niver, *A School of England*, 219. See also Jonathan Swift's (1667-1745) satire concerning "A Voyage to Lilliput," in Miriam Kosh Starkman, *Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings by Jonathan Swift,*, originally published in 1726 (New York: Bantam, reprint 1981, 35-90. To summarize: This first voyage, as described by Swift, is about a war over the breaking of an egg. Some thought that the egg should be broken at the little end, others at the big end. Thus, some were called "Big-Enders" and others "Little-Enders." This story illustrates vividly the controversy over the communion table. In other words, should the communion table be placed in the east end of the church building or middle? This controversy raged during the reign of Charles I (1625-49). One cannot help but wonder about the one-cup party versus the multiple-cups party that presently exists within the Churches of Christ. The scenario about the communion table is just as frivolous as is the insistence upon one drinking vessel during the communion today. Swift uses his story about the war of the Lilliputians over whether to break the egg at the big end or the little end to illustrate the futility of the conditions that existed in his day over so many issues—such as robes and the communion table.

[71] Ibid., 296.

[72] See Livingston, "Westminster Confession," *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 551, where he writes about the Westminster Confession:

The profession of Presbyterian faith drawn up by the Westminster Assembly. It was approved by Parliament in 1648, having been ratified by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the previous year. It immediately established itself as the definitive statement of Presbyterian doctrine in the English-speaking world.

[73] Ibid., 551.

[74] See Ibid., “Bishops’ Wars,” 66, where Livingston writes: “Two brief campaigns in Scotland in 1639 and 1640. After Charles I tried to enforce the use of the BCP in Scotland, the Scots rebelled, with the avowed aim of abolishing episcopacy.”

[75] Ibid., “Covenanters, 134, where Livingstone states:

> Bodies of Presbyterians in Scotland who bound themselves by oath to maintain their religion. Various small covenants were signed between 1556 and 1562, leading up to the King’s Confession of 1581. Charles I’s attempt to introduce the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637 prompted the National Covenant of 1638. After the outbreak of the civil War the English Parliament made an alliance with the Scots in terms of the Solemn League and Covenant (1643; q.v.). The persecution of Presbyterians in Scotland between 1661 and 1668 gave rise to further Convents.

[76] See Niver, *A School History of England*, 221. Again, one is reminded of the “Big-Ender” and the “Little-Enders. Does one break the egg at the big end or does one break the egg at the little end? Does it really matter?

[77] Niver, *A School History of England*, 253.

[78] See Livingston, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, “Corporation Act, 1661,” 131, where Livingston details the Act:

> The Act requiring members of municipal corporations to take an oath abjuring rebellion against the king, declaring the *Solemn League and Covenant null and unlawful, and affirming that they had received Communion acc. To the rites of the C of E in the year preceding their election.

[79] Ibid., 241-243.

[80] Ibid., “Restoration, The,” 436, where Livingston describes the term: “A Term used by English historians to describe the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660, and the period immediately following this event.”

[81] Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714,*(New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1980 *162.*

[82] See Maurice Ashley, “Vane, Sir Henry,” in *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (electronic Version), copyright 1995, Grolier, Inc., Danbury, Ct., where one reads:

> An English statesman, Sir Henry Vane the Younger, b. 1613, d. June 14, 1662, was a leading parliamentarian during the English Civil War. A Puritan convert, he was colonial governor of Massachusetts (1663-37). Returning to England, Vane became a member of the Short and the Long Parliaments and negotiated (1643) the alliance bringing the Scots into the English Civil War on Parliament’s side.

Although against the king's execution, Vane served on the Commonwealth's Council of State (1649-53), handling naval and foreign affairs. An advocate of parliamentary supremacy, he opposed the dissolution of the Rump Parliament by Oliver Cromwell in 1653 and was imprisoned (1656) for attacking Cromwell's Protectorate. In 1659 he supported the army's overthrow of Richard Cromwell. After the restoration of the monarchy, Vane was executed for high treason,"

[83] Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714*, 162

[84] For a complete listing of his works, see *The Complete Works of John Bunyan*, 3 vols. (Delaware: The National foundation for Christian Educations, reprint 1968).

[85] See Elgin Moyer, Earle E. Cairns, revised and enlarged, *Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 87, s.v. "John Bunyan."

[86] See Livingstone, "Rutherford, Samuel," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 450. See also, John Purves, *Fair Sunshine: Character Studies of the Scottish Covenanters*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1957), 19.

[87] Purves, *Fair Sunshine: Character Studies of the Scottish Covenanters*, (Pennsylvania: Banner or Truth Trust, 1968), 19.

[88] Ibid., 19, 20.

[89] Niver, *A School History of England*, 252.

[90] Ibid., 253.

[91] Ibid., 253-254.

[92] See the *American Heritage Talking Dictionary*, CD ROM (Cambridge: Softkey, 1994), where the following definition is given: "A member of an 18th- and 19th-century British political part that was opposed to the Tories. [Probably short for *Whiggamore*, a member of a body of 17th-century Scottish Presbyterians rebels."

[93] Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, 169.

[94] See "Dundee, John Graham of Claverhouse, 1st viscount," in *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (Electronic Version), copyright 1995 Grolier, Inc., Danbury, Ct.

[95] See Livingston, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 134, where he writes:

> COVENANTERS. Bodies of Presbyterians in Scotland who bound themselves by oath to maintain their religion. Various small covenants were signed between 1556 and 1562, leading up to the King's Confession of 1581. Charles I's attempt to introduce the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637 prompted the National Covenant of 1638. After the outbreak of the Civil War the English parliament made an alliance with the Scots in terms of the Solemn League and Covenant (1643; q.v.). The persecution of Presbyterians in Scotland between 1661 and 1688 gave rise to further Covenants.

[96] Niver, *A School History of England*, 255.

[97] See "Monmouth, James Scott, Duke of," in *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (Electronic Version) where it gives a brief history of James Scott, duke of Monmouth and Buccleuch:

> James Scott, duke of Monmouth and Buccleuch, b. Apr. 9, 1649, d. July 15, 1685, an illegitimate son of CHARLES II of England, led a rebellion against Charles's successor, JAMES II, in 1685. He married Anne Scott, countess of Buccleuch, whose name he adopted, and was created a duke in 1663. Monmouth became captain-general of the armed forces in 1678. When the 1st earl of SHAFTESBURY started his efforts to exclude the Roman Catholic James from the succession, he put forward the Protestant Monmouth as a possible heir. It was claimed that King Charles had married Monmouth's mother, Lucy Walter, and that Monmouth was therefore legitimate. Charles himself denied this, however, and sent both Monmouth and James abroad in 1679. Monmouth soon returned but took refuge (1684) in Europe after exposure of the Rye House Plot to murder both Charles and James.
>
> On June 11, 1685, four months after Charles's death, Monmouth landed at Lyme Regis, Dorset. On July 6, however, his rebel force was smashed at Sedgemoor, Somerset, by troops led by John Churchill (later duke of MARLBOROUGH). Monmouth was executed and his supporters were rounded up and tried in the Bloody Assizes conducted by Baron JEFFREYS.

[98] Niver, *A School History of England*, 257.

[99] See "Jeffreys, George Jeffreys, 1st Baron," in *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (Electronic Version), for a summary:

> The English judge George Jeffreys, b. between October 1644 and May 1645, d. Apr. 18, 1689, was created Baron Jeffreys of Wem in May 1685. He gained notoriety for his part in the trials of the supporters of the duke of MONMOUTH's rebellion against King JAMES II in July 1685. In the trials, called the Bloody Assizes, nearly 200 persons were condemned to death and about 800 transported to the New World. Especially infamous was Jeffrey's insistence on a verdict of guilty for Alice Lisle, who was accused of harboring rebels; he also extorted money from many of the defendants. Nonetheless, in September 1685 he became lord chancellor. After the flight of King James in December 1688, Jeffreys was arrested; he died in the Tower of London.

[100] See "assize" in *The American Heritage Talking* Dictionary, CD ROM (Cambride: Softkey, 1994):

> 1a. A session of a court. b. A decree or edict rendered at such a session. 3. Law. A judicial inquest, the writ by which it is instituted, or the verdict of the jurors. 4. **assizes. A.** One of the periodic court sessions formerly held in each of the counties of England and Wales for the trial of civil or criminal cases.

[101] Niver, *A School History of England*, 257.

[102] See Livingston, *The Concise Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church,* 505, where he writes:

> TEST ACT, THE (1673). The Act requiring all holders of office under the Crown to receive Communion acc. To the usage of the C of E, to take the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance to the Sovereign, and to make the "Declaration against Transubstantiation." It remained in force until 1829.

[103] See *The American Heritage Talking Dictionary, CD ROM,* for the following definition:

> NANTES. A city of Western France on the Loire River west of Tours. Dating to pre-Roman times, it was captured by Norse raiders in the ninth century and later fell to the dukes of Brittany. The Edict of Nantes, granting limited religious and civil liberties to the Huguenots, was issued in 1598 by Henry IV of France and revoked in 1685 by Louis XIV. Population, 240, 539.

[104] See Niver, *A School History of England*, 258.

[105] See Maurice Ashley "Jeffreys, George Jeffreys, 1st Barron, *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (Electronic Version), copyright 1995, Grolier, Inc., Danbury, CT, where the author writes:

> James's reign lasted only 4 years. In 1687 and 1688,in a tactless attempt to procure liberty of conscience for all his Christian subjects, he issued two declarations of indulgence, which alienated the Church of England. He also evaded the TEST ACT of 1673 by promoting Catholics to high office and military commissions. In 1688 he put seven bishops on trial for refusing to order his declarations to be read in all the churches, but the bishops were acquitted. All of these actions contributed to his overthrow, which was finally precipitated by the birth of his son in June 1688. The prospect of a Catholic succession led the Protestant opposition to invite James's Dutch Protestant nephew and son-in-law, William of Orange, to come to England. He assumed the crown as WILLIAM III, and his wife, James's older daughter, became MARY II.

[106] See Niver, *A School History of England*, 258-260.

[107] See Maurice Ashley, "Glorious Revolution," *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (Electronic Version), 1995, Grolier, Inc., Danbury, Ct. where the author gives some very insightful comments:

> The Glorious Revolution is the name given to the overthrow in 1688 of the Roman Catholic JAMES II of England and the accession to the throne of his daughter MARY II and her Dutch Protestant husband, WILLIAM III. Invited to invade England by seven English noblemen, William hoped to bring England into the imminent War of the GRAND ALLIANCE against France. He feared that James would ally himself with the French king LOUIS XIV or that James's favoritism toward his Catholic subjects would

so provoke the Protestant majority as to cause another civil war, thus making England impotent in Europe.

[108] Ibid., where the author writes:

The invitation was sent to William on June 30, 1688; when he arrived in November, his partisans rose in rebellion in Yorkshire and elsewhere. William's triumph was bloodless; James's forces, under John Churchill, later duke of MARLBOROUGH, deserted, and James himself fled. When William and Mary were made joint sovereigns (1689), they acquiesced in a Declaration and BILL OF RIGHTS, which opened the road to constitutional monarchy.

[109] Ibid., once more the author offers some helpful comments to explain the events surrounding the conflict:

In England, William was never popular, and his position became temporarily precarious after Mary's death in 1694. Parliament refused to support his costly anti-French designs after Ryswick until Louis's ambitions became clearer. William approved the Toleration Act (1689) for nonconformists, and his Whig ministers established (1694) the funded national debt and the Bank of England. He was also compelled to accept a BILL OF RIGHTS (1689) and the Triennial Act (1694) requiring that a new Parliament should meet at least once every three years. The Act of SETTLEMENT (1701) further restricted royal prerogatives. William was succeeded on the British throne by Mary's sister, Queen Anne.

[110] See William Statsky, "Magna Charta," *West's Legal Thesaurus Dictionary, A Resource for the Writer and the Computer Researcher* (San Francisco: West Publishing Co., 1985), 471-472, where he pens:

Magna Charta: The great charter, considered the foundation of English constitutional liberty. In 1215, King John granted the charter to the barons at Runnymede. Its provisions regulated the administration of justice, defined ecclesiastical jurisdiction, secured personal liberty and rights of property, defined limits on taxation, etc.

[111] See Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, 249-253.

[112] Ibid., 210.

[113] Ibid., 210-211.

[114] Ibid., 253.

[115] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, originally published 1689, reprint (New York: Prometheus, 1990), 17.

[116] Thomas Campbell, "Declaration and Address" in *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, 109, 110.

[117] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 13.

[118] Ibid., 11.

[119] Ibid., 73.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid., 74.

[122] Ibid. It is significant that even though Locke speaks of denominations as different religions, he still speaks of the various groups as of the same religion. This concept of different religions is still in vogue today by many religious groups. For instance, if one differs with my interpretation, then this person is of a different religion, in spite of the fact that both fellowships profess faith in Christ as the savior of the world.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid., 75. One cannot help but reflect upon the words—"express words of Scripture"—of Locke as that which Thomas Campbell, as well as Alexander Campbell, also expressed in their writings, especially the *Declaration and Address* by Thomas Campbell.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 75, 76.

[128] Ibid., 76.

[129] Ibid., 76, 77.

[130] See Dabney Phillips, *Restoration Principles and Personalities* (: University, AL: Youth Action, 1975), 13-31.

[131] Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address* in C. A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, reprint (Joplin: College Press, 1985), 110.

[132] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 77.

[133] Alexander Campbell, "Millennium II," *The Millennial Harbinger* 1 (April 1830): 146.

[134] Alexander Campbell, "To Mr. William Jones, of London, Letter IV," *The Millennial Harbinger* 6 (March 1835): 112.

[135] Leroy Garrett, "Who Is A Heretic?," *Mission Messenger* 25 (March 1963): 35. See also Carl Ketcherside, "What Is Heresy," *Mission Messenger* 25 (March 1963): 39-44. To access these essays ONLINE, go to http://www.unity-in-diversity.org.

[136] Ibid.

[137] See John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* for the following examples of Locke's diversity in expressing his thinking: (1) "in express words"—three time, pp 24, 27; (2) "express law"—one time, p 35; (3) "express command"—one time, p 46; "express word of Scripture"—three times, pp 75, 76; (4) "commanded in express terms"—one time, p 77; (5) "Scriptures teach in express words"—one time, p 77; and (6) "expressly teach"—one time, p 75.

[138] See Alexander Campbell, *Declaration and Address and Appendix* for the following examples of Campbell's diversity in expressing his thinking: (1) "expressly enjoined"—two times, pp 109, 160; (2) "an express Scripture"—one time, 133; (3) not expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God"—one time, p 134; (4) "expressly revealed"—one time, p 137; (5) "express terms or by approved precedent"—two times, pp 138, 150; (6) "expressly produced"—one time, p 139; (7) "expressly contradict"—one time, p 139; (8) "express letter of the law"—one time, p 139; (9) "expressly prohibited"—one time, p 141; (10) "no express law"—one time, p 141; (11) "expressly commanded"—two times, p 141; (12) "expressly revealed will of God"—two times, pp 146, 183; (13) "express and declaration and injunctions"—one time, p 149; (14) "expressly revealed and enjoined"—two times, pp 149, 160; (15) "the express law of Christ"—one time, p 159; (16) "express revelation"—one time, p 163; (17) "express light of divine revelation"—one time, p 178; (18) "express terms"—one time, p 178; (19) "in express terms of the Bible"—one time, p 178; (20) "expressly declared"—one time, p 179; (21) "express terms"—one time, p 183; (22) "express declaration"—one time, p 191; and (23) "expressly said"—one time, p 199.

[139] Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 24-25.

[140] See C. A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, 108-109.

[141] Thomas Campbell, "*Declaration and Address,*" in C. A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, 112, 113.

[142] Ibid., 110-111.

[143] Alexander Campbell, "Millennium—No II," *Millennial Harbinger* 1, no. 4 1830 (Bethany, VA., Alexander Campbell, Ed; reprint, Joplin, MO: College Press, 1987): 145.

[144] Ibid., 146.

[145] Alexander Campbell, "The Foundation of Hope and of Christian Union," *The Christian Baptist* 1, no. 9 [April 5, 1824] (Buffaloe, Brooke County, VA: Editor, 1827; reprint, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate, 1955): 177.

[146] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 57.

[147] Ibid., 40, 41.

[148] Alexander Campbell, "The Foundation of Hope, and of Christian Union," *The Christian Baptist* 1, no. 5 (April 5, 1824): 176.

[149] Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 24, 25.

[150] Ibid., 29.

[151] Alexander Campbell, "The Foundation of Hope and of Christian Union," *The Christian Baptist*, 1, no. 5 (April 5, 1824): 178.

[152] Alexander Campbell, "Millennium. NO. II," *Millennial Harbinger* 1, no. 4 (1830): 145.

[153] C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 1988), 2.

[154] Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 24, 25. The following is Locke's use of the term "church of Christ" in his *Letter*: page 13 (once), page 17 (once), page 24 (twice), and page 25 (twice); also, he uses the expression "Christian Church" on the following pages: pages 16 (once), page 30 (once); he also speaks of the "true church" on the following pages: page 13 (once), and page 24 (once).

[155] Ibid., 13.

[156] Ibid., 16, 17.

[157] Ibid., 22.

[158] Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address* in Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, 107,108.

[159] Ibid., 108.

[160] Quoted in H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 51. This document--*The First London confession, 1644*—is available ON-LINE from http://www.cet.com/~dlavoie/solo.christo/1644b.html [accessed 24 March 2001].

[161] Alexander Campbell, "The Editor's Response to Mr. Broaddus," *Millennial Harbinger* 4, New Series, no. 12 (December 1840): 556.

[162] Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, in Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, 115.

[163] Ibid., 116.

[164] Ibid., 122.

[165] Ibid., 131.

[166] Ibid., 134.

[167] Ibid., 154.

[168] Ibid., 161.

[169] Alexander Campbell, "Instances of Diligence in Reading the Scriptures," *Millennial Harbinger* 4, New Series, no. 12 (December 1840): 548.

Be Filled With the Spirit

Thrust Statement: **Ethical behavior is the means by which one determines if he or she is filled with the Holy Spirit.**

Scripture Reading: **Ephesians 5:18**

Paul, in the Ephesian Epistle, states emphatically that the saints in Ephesus are to "be filled with the Spirit" (**5:18**). What does this mean? Is Paul speaking of the baptism of the Spirit that occurred on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**)? Is this the "outpouring" of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh (**Joel 2:28-29**)? Or is this filling associated with ethical conduct? In other words, does this filling have to do with the "fruit of the Spirit" in **Galatians 5:22-26**? As one seeks to understand this phrase, one must again look to the context in order to draw conclusions that fit the framework of the text. Christians ought not to assume that this filling is associated with Spirit baptism. Believers frequently have **Acts 2** in the back of their minds as they read **Ephesians 5:18**.

It is not uncommon for Christians to read **5:18** with the "outpouring" of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:1-13**). Yet, as one reads **Acts 2**, one is conscious that the supernatural outpouring of the Spirit on this particular day is no more typical than Paul's conversion experience on the Damascus road. The "violent wind" and "the tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them" (**2:2,3**) are no more characteristic of conversion than the "light from heaven" and the "voice" in the conversion of Saul (**9:3-4**). One does not have to experience this kind of phenomenon to receive the inward experience of salvation with the gift of the Holy Spirit in a non-miraculous measure. Even when one experiences the special gifts of the Spirit, this does not, in and of itself, elevate the gifted person to a state of greater spirituality.

For instance, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians reveals the rivalries that existed in this congregation in spite of the Spiritual gifts. Paul writes: "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ" (**1 Corinthians 3:1**).[1] This Epistle begins with recognition of spiritual gifts:

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ

> Jesus. [5] For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— [6] because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. [7] Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed (**1:4-7**).

Even though the Corinthians were showered with spiritual gifts, they lacked being filled with the Spirit. As stated above, Paul writes: "I could not address you as spiritual (πνευματικοι' pneumatikoi), but as "worldly" (σαψρκινοι sarkinoi). In other words, Paul could not address the Corinthians as spiritual but as carnal. One is immediately aware that the Corinthians were not filled with the Spirit even though they possessed spiritual gifts and were sealed by the Spirit. They were still "mere infants in Christ." Once more listen to Paul as he drives home his point about their carnality:

> Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. [2] I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. [3] You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? [4] For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men (**3:1-4**)?

Worldliness still plays a major role in the lives of God's people. Many Christians are not careful about how they live. The full context for this study (**Ephesians 5:18**) is **4:17—6:9**. Prior to Paul's two imperatives in **5:18**, he enumerates a long list of negatives that prevents one from being filled with the Spirit. In **5:15**, he exhorts the believers to "Be very careful, then, how you live." What does this verse mean to you? Does this verse relate to the command to "be filled with the Spirit"? Paul explains his comments by three "not . . . but" contrast in **5:15b** to **5:18**.

5:15	**5:17**	**5:18**
Be very careful, then, how you live—not (μηψ, mh) as unwise but (αςλλαψ, alla) as wise.	Therefore do not (μηψ, mh) be foolish, but (αςλλαψ, alla) understand what the Lord's will is.	Do not (μηψ, mh) get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead (αςλλαψ, alla), be filled with the Spirit.

The NIV hides the Greek structure of this contrast in **5:18** with the word *instead*, which in the Greek text is αςλλαψ (alla). These three "not . . . but" contrasts are followed by six commands:

1. Do not get drunk on wine (**5:18a**).
2. Be filled with the Spirit (**5:18b**).
3. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (**5:19a**).
4. Sing (**5:19b**).
5. Make music (**5:19b**).
6. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (**5:21**).

An examination of the Greek text for **5:18-21** reveals that this text is one sentence in the Greek, but in the NIV there are five sentences with six commands. In the Greek text there are two imperatives—"Do not get drunk" and "be filled with the Spirit"—and five participles:

1. Speaking (λαλου'ντë, lalountes) to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (**5:19**).[2]
2. Singing (ά[δοντë, adontes) [**5:19**].
3. Making music ΄αψλλοντë, yallontes) [**5:19**].
4. Giving thanks (ευςχαριστου'ντë, eucristountes) [**5:20**]
5. Submitting (υΣποτασσοψμενοι, Jupotassomenoi) [**5:21**].

Even though participles may be interpreted as commands, nevertheless, the context indicates that these five participles illustrate the outcome of being filled with the Spirit in **5:18**. As Christians seek to please God in their daily lives, they must understand what the will of God is. Paul addresses this search for ethical behavior in **5:17** that brings honor to God: "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." After enumerating conduct that fails to glorify God, Paul writes: " Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (**5:15-16**). This admonition is similar to Paul's exhortation in **5:8-10**: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord." Paul is concerned about dangerous and unacceptable behavior, or lifestyle. He provides a contrast between giving the "devil a foothold" and "being filled with the Spirit."

The statement in **5:15**—"Be very careful (αςκριβώ', akribws, "carefully"), then, how you live"—seems to be motivated from **4:17-19**:

> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Do you live as unbelievers live? Are you darkened in your understanding of God's will for your life? Are your daily actions separated from God's life? Are you a drunkard? Do you go to nightclubs to carouse in drinking bouts that bring dishonor to God? Are you a drug addict? Do you sell illicit drugs? Do you take illicit drugs? Do you indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more? Have you put on the new man—a person created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness? Is your life controlled by bitterness, rage, and anger? Is your life filled with brawling, slander, and every form of malice? Do you forgive others as God forgives you in Christ? Do you live a life of love? Do you participate in obscenity and coarse joking, which is out of place for Christians? Do you approve of the fruitless deeds of darkness? Do you want to be filled with the Spirit? If so, then listen to Paul's answer to how an individual can be filled with the Holy Spirit:

> The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13] Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. [14] Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (**Romans 13:12-14**).

God wants individuals to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus; He does not want individuals to gratify their sinful nature. God wants individuals to be filled with His Spirit. Drunkenness was rampant in the first century as it is today. Pay attention to Paul yet again as he seeks to call attention to the life that is and the life that is not filled with the Holy Spirit:

> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. [9] For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. [10] He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (**1 Thessalonians 5:7-11).**

As one turns his or her attention another time to **Ephesians 5:18**, one is reminded that the New Testament never commands one to be baptized with the Spirit, but rather, one observes that the command is: "be filled with the Spirit." "Be filled" (πληρου'σθε plhrousqe) is present tense, passive voice, and imperative mood. The chief evidence of the Spirit's indwelling is moral—for example, the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**. This filling in **Ephesians 5:18** is a repeatable activity in the lives of God's people. This filling can be lost if it is not maintained. If one fails to exemplify godly behavior in his or her life, this breakdown in holy performance grieves the Holy Spirit (**4:30**). In this context (**5:18**), "with the Spirit" (εΣν πνευψματι en pneumati) is similar to Paul's phraseology in **Galatians 5:16, 25** concerning ethical conduct that brings glory to God.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, he exhorts the Galatians to "live by the Spirit" and "you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (**5:16**). But in **5:25**, he rephrases his admonition: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Whether one says, "be filled with the Spirit," or "live by the Spirit," or "keep in step with the Spirit," Paul is referring to ethical conduct that will not grieve the Holy Spirit. To "live by the Spirit" is to bring one's life into harmony with the teachings of Jesus. One cannot read **Galatians 5:19-26** without an awareness that the "fruit of the Spirit" consists of moral qualities. One who is Spirit filled is under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. "Be filled with the Spirit," for Paul, is not optional, but mandatory.

The verb plhrousqe ("be filled") is second person plural. In other words, this command is addressed to the entire Christian community. No one is to get drunk; every believer is to be Spirit-filled. This verb is also passive. Paul is saying, "Let the Spirit fill you." This passive verb is significant in its implications. One should eradicate from his or her life what grieves the Holy Spirit; one should cast aside ungodly behavior that prevents the Spirit from exercising control over his or her life. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians

helps to clarify this verb in **Ephesians 5:18**. For example, he writes in **Colossians 3:16**: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." From this parallel, one realizes that one must never separate the Spirit and the Word of God. The words of Jesus should dwell abundantly in every believer. Christians should not give the "devil a foothold" (**Ephesians 4:27**).

Another aspect of Greek grammar in this verb ("be filled") is that it is present tense. In Greek there are two kinds of imperative—an aorist imperative describing a single action and a present imperative describing an action that is continuous. For example, in **John 2: 7**, Jesus says, "Fill the jars with water." The verb γεμιψσατε (gemisate, "fill") is aorist, active, and imperative. The imperative is aorist since the jars were to be filled only once. On the other hand, when Paul writes: "Be filled with the Spirit," he uses a present imperative, which conveys the ideas that the filling is to be continuous. Since the Spirit has sealed Christians (**Ephesians 1:13; 4:30**), then Christians should allow the Spirit to saturate their lives continuously. Paul captures this concept of allowing the Spirit to control their day-to-day behavior in his Epistle to Rome:

> Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man[e] is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind[f] is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (**Romans 8:5-11**).

This announcement by Paul is very similar to his admonition that led to him to the command in **Ephesians 5:18**. For a second time, one should reread the verses preceding this verse in order to grasp the point that Paul seeks to convey:

> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (**5:15-20**).

Paul, as stated above, uses equivalent expressions to enhance one's understanding of this concept of "be filled with the Spirit." For example, Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida write:

> In a number of languages it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak of "being filled with the Spirit." Such an expression is so frequent in the Scriptures that it would seem to make sense in any language, but this is simply not true. One can, however, use an equivalent expression such as "be controlled by the Spirit" or "let the Spirit rule you" or "let the Spirit live within you."[3]

Paul draws a contrast between a pagan's way of life and a Christians' way of life—in or out of the public assembly. In order for one to bear faithful and effective testimony for Jesus Christ, one must be "filled with the Spirit," that is to say, one's life must be under the control of the Holy Spirit. In other words, one's thoughts and one's life must be taken up with Jesus Christ, to whom the Spirit bears witness. Earlier, Paul elaborated on the negative aspects of ethical conduct that portrayed a life devoid of God's Spirit (**4:17—5:18a**). Participation in the works of the flesh grieves God's Holy Spirit who dwells in those who have become a part of the elect (**4:30**). Beginning with **5:18b**, Paul issues an order in which he tells the Ephesians to "be filled with the Spirit." After issuing this command, he expresses this filling, as stated above, with five participles: (1) speaking, (2) singing, (3) psalming, (4) giving thanks, and (5) submitting.

Speaking (First Participle)

It is significant that three of the participles have to do with singing (**5:19**). The first is: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." "Speak" equals "speaking" or "addressing" one another. Christians are not to engage in lewd singing, but in singing that builds one another up in the faith. This singing is not limited to a so-called worship service; it is one's way of life—twenty-four hours a day. Dr. S. D. F. Salmond is correct when he writes:

> There is nothing, however, to suggest the thought of actual worship. The sentence specifies one of the ways in which the condition of being "filled with the Sprit" expresses itself. In their intercourse one with another their language would not be that of ordinary convention, far less that of base intoxication, but that of spiritual devotion and thankfulness.[4]

Singing and Playing (Second and Third Participles)

Whether Christians assemble for corporate worship or not, the teaching is the same. One can only surmise from this context that the meetings of God's people must have been musical occasions for exhorting one another and offering praise to God through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The word *psalms* imply a musical instrument.[5] The next two participles also develop the kind of music employed among God's people—singing and making music. Once again, Stott's comments are helpful in identification of these two kinds of music: "*Singing and making melody* (perhaps the verbs combine vocal and instrumental music to the *Lord with all your heart* (verse 19)."[6] In this same vein, Salmond comments:

> What the distinctions are, if any, between the three terms has been considerably disputed. ψαλμός (yalmos) is a religious song, especially one sung to a musical accompaniment, and *par excellence* an OT psalm; ὑμνός (Jumnos) is properly speaking a song of praise; ᾠδή (wdh) is the most general term, applicable to all kinds of songs, secular or sacred, accompanied or unaccompanied.[7]

Since many Christians object to instrumental music in their so-called worship service, it is necessary to deal with the word *psalms* in seeking to understand what it is that Paul speaks of as a part of being filled with the Spirit. T. K. Abbott is also helpful in understanding the word *psalms*, he writes: "ψαλμός (Yalmos) from ψάλλειν, (yallein)

primarily the plucking of the strings, is used by classical authors to mean the sound of the harp, and hence any strain of music."[8] Why did Paul mention both "singing" and "playing" ("making melody," KJV) if both are identical? R. C. H. Lenski is quite beneficial in understanding **5:19**:

> "Giving utterance" is general; the next two participles specify: "Singing and playing with your heart to the Lord." Singing is done by the means of the voice; playing by means of an instrument. ψαλλω (Yallw) means to let a string twang and thus to play a lyre or a harp, and then to play any instrument as an accompaniment to the voice. Thus the two are here combined: "singing and playing." "Making melody" (our versions) will do if it is applied to instruments. But the view of some commentators that the dative indicates place: "in your heart," and that this is silent singing in the heart, is untenable. "Giving utterance" does not refer to audible music, over against which the non-audible "in your heart" is placed. There is no καψι (kai) before the second participle. The second and the third participle define the first: *all acts* are audible. "Giving utterance" means: by singing with the voice and by playing on instruments. But this is never to be only mechanical it is to be done "with your heart to the Lord: and not merely with the lips and fingers for men. The dative "for the Lord" is like the reflexive "for yourselves." We ourselves and the Lord go together; all this music is between him and us. He wants no lip service from us. We must sing and play to him "with our heart," and he ever looks to the heart.[9]

Lenski has brought out the Greek text that Christians frequently overlook in their analysis of this passage. Many within the Churches of Christ interpret "making melody in your heart to the Lord" as the heart, that is, the heart is the instrument that is to be played, which excludes musical instruments. This odd approach to **Ephesians 5:19** is with strong subjective biases, so it seems to me, against instrumental music. Many within the Stone/Campbell Movement view this text through colored glasses. "Making melody" is simply the same as "making music." One makes music by playing instruments. Some translations capture the meaning of "making melody" in their versions. For example, *The Net Bible* translates the Greek text as follows: "Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music[27] in[28] your hearts to the Lord."[10]

In is in this vein that *The New American Bible* also translates this Greek word yallontes as "playing": "Addressing one another (in) psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts."[11] This translation reveals that to "make music" is the same as "playing." Another translation that captures the meaning of the Greek word ψαλλοντε (pallontes) is *The New International Version:* "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."[12] Once more, *The Jewish New Testament* also grabs hold of the meaning of the Greek word: "Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to each other; sing to the Lord and make music in your heart to him;"[13]

In Your Heart

Some religious journals, especially within the Churches of Christ, place emphasis upon "in your heart" as the instrument. The argument generally proceeds upon this line:

"One is to play or strike the cords of the heart." But is this what Paul is saying? One must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down from the church fathers. The traditions of the church often make it difficult, if not almost impossible, for Christians to go back to the text and read it without spectacles. Another translation should help one to grasp the significance of the phrase "in your heart" as simply meaning "with all your heart." For example, the *Revised Standard Version* renders this phrase this way: "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart."[14] The *Contemporary English Bible* translates this verse: "When you meet together, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, as you praise the Lord with all your heart."[15] John R. W. Stott, as usual, encapsulates the very essence of the phrase with clarity:

> This leads to the second result of the Spirit's fullness, which is "singing and making melody" to the Lord. The Holy Spirit loves to glorify the Lord Jesus, so manifesting him to his people that they delight to sing his praise. Unmusical people have sometimes taken comfort from this exhortation to sing to the Lord "in your hearts" (AV), as if their jubilation could be entirely inward, intended only "for the ears of the Lord" (J. B. Phillips). But the RSV is probably right to translate the expression "with all your heart." The heart is not so much the place as the manner in which we are to sing. The apostle exhorts us not to silence, but to heartfelt worship.[16]

As one seeks to uncover the truths of God's Word, it is necessary to cite sources to help one in his or her recovery of the intent of the text. The following is another lengthy text, but this citation also helps one to get rid of the mishandling of this text by many sincere Christians. Listen to Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown as they elaborate upon both ἁψλλοντë (yallontes, "playing") and τή' καρδιψά (th kardia, "with the heart"):

> The Spirit give true eloquence; wine, a spurious eloquence. **Psalms**—generally accompanied by an instrument. **Hymns**—in direct praise to God (cf. Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:26; Jas. 5:13). **Songs**—the general term for lyric pieces; "spiritual" is added to mark their being here restricted to sacred subjects, thought not merely to direct praises of God, but also containing exhortations, prophecies, etc. Contrast the drunken "songs," Amos 8:10. **Making melody**—Greek, "playing and singing with an instrument." **In your heart**—not merely with the tongue; but the serious feeling of the heart accompanying the singing of the lips (cf. 1. Cor. 14:15; Ps 47:7).[17]

As one seeks to unravel the true meaning of "in your heart" (τή' καρδιψά, th kardia), it would be helpful for one to look at a similar phrase in **Colossians 3:16**:

> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

"With gratitude in your hearts" (εςν τή' χαψριτι ά[δοντë εςν ταϊ' καρδιψαϊ υΣμω'ν, en th cariti adontes en tais kardiais Jumwn, "with grace singing in your hearts"). As noted, the NIV translates this Greek phrase as "With gratitude in your hearts," which is

equivalent to Paul's words in **Epheisans 5:19**. Paul, in his writings, frequently varies his expression to express the same idea. For instance, in the **sixth chapter of Ephesians**, he writes concerning slaves' obedience to their masters: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ" (**6:5**). "With sincerity of heart" is a translation of εςν αΣπλοψτητι τη῾ καρδιψᾳ (en Japlothti ths kardias, "in singleness of the heart"). Again, Paul fluctuates his expression in this same chapter when he addresses the slaves: "Doing the will of God from your heart" (εςκ῾υχη῾, ek yuchs, "from [the] soul") [**6:6**].

Again, Paul modifies his expression in order to capture forcefully the necessity of the heart in one's relationship with his or her master: "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men" (**6:7**). The phrase "Serve wholeheartedly" is from the Greek μετ= ευςνοιψᾳ (met eunoias, "good will"). Whether one says "in your heart" or "with sincerity of heart" or "from the heart" or "serve wholeheartedly," one is saying the same thing with synonymous expressions. In the **Book of Romans**, Paul comments upon the Romans as having been obedient to the ethical teachings of Jesus as having come "from the Heart" (KJV). Paul writes: "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted (**Romans 6:17**).

The NIV translates the Greek text as "wholeheartedly." The word *wholeheartedly* is from the Greek εςκ καρδιψᾳ (εςκ kardias, "out of [the] heart"). Peter, too, uses this same Greek phrase εςκ καρδιψᾳ (εςκ kardias "out of [the] heart") in his admonition that Christians should love one another: " Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart[b] (**1 Peter 1:22**). For Paul, "singing and playing" are never mechanical—it is to be done with the heart. In conclusion of this analysis of "in your heart," the following words of Solomon concerning his Father, David, sums up the meaning one should attach to this phrase:

> My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. [18] But the LORD said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a temple for my Name, you did well to have this in your heart (**1 Kings 8:17-18**).

Giving Thanks (Fourth Participle)

If one sings and plays with gratitude in one's heart to the Lord, this mindset will result in a life that is exuberant in thanksgiving for salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. This fourth participle describes one of the ways that one is filled with the Spirit. It is the Spirit of thankfulness for what God has accomplished for humanity in and through Jesus Christ. Paul writes: "Aways giving thanks (ευςχαριστου῾ντε, eucaristountes) to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (**5:20**). This exhortation must be read within the context of the **Book of Ephesians**. As one reflects upon the doctrine of the Trinity in this short Epistle, one observes that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are working together to bring about salvation. This comprehension of redemption should awaken within everyone a spirit of thanksgiving. In other words, this knowledge of redemption informs and directs one's devotion to the Trinity. Paul's reflection upon redemption resulted in his cry:

> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. [4] For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love [5] he[a] predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace [8] that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding (**Ephesians 1:3-8**).

In verses three and six, one observes that the word *praise* is employed twice. Knowledge of God's mystery evokes spiritual devotion and thankfulness for salvation by grace in and through Jesus. **Ephesians 5:20** is a part of the **verse 19**: "Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (**5:20**). "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" qualifies the participle "giving thanks." When one puts into practice the three previous participles, one's life will be a life of "giving thanks" for "everything." One's life that is filled with thanksgiving will be a life that expresses itself in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Earlier, Paul speaks of "thanksgiving" following his renunciation of ethical behavior:

> Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children [2] and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. [3] But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. [4] Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving (**5:1-4**).

Why did Paul throw in the word *thanksgiving* in verse four? Is Paul insisting on the grace of thankfulness for the gift of His love to sinful men and women? Paul reminds his readers of God's gift of love, namely, Jesus Christ. One should not live a life of wickedness, but rather a life of thankfulness for God's Atonement through Jesus Christ. Thankfulness will be expressed individually as well as corporately. A part of this thankfulness issues in prayers of thanks for all saints: "For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, [16] I have not stopped giving thanks (ευςχαριστω'ν, eucharistwn) for you, remembering you in my prayers" (**1:15-16**). Does intercession of thankfulness for God's people overflow in your prayers?

Since Paul does not define its content, nevertheless, he demonstrates in the remainder of this Epistle how the giving of thanks relates to what God has accomplished for the Christian community by forgiving their sins, raising them with Christ, making them into a new people, accepting them through faith in Jesus, and giving the Holy Spirit as a seal of one's inheritance. Ernest Best writes: "Not sexual lust and covetousness, but thanksgiving is the fitting response to God's goodness and is basic to Christian existence."[18] These unholy vices will not be named among God's people, but, on the other hand, the lives of God's children will abound in being filled with the Spirit (**5:18-20**), which issues in speaking "to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, [20] always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (**5:19-20**). One's life should never be devoid of this characteristic.

Submitting (Fifth Participle)

In this participle, Paul continues to explain what it means for one to "be filled with the Spirit." Paul writes: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (**5:21**). This attribute is not the way of the world. It is the basic nature of individuals to dominate others. Yet, this admonition of submission is the will of God. Just as there is spiritual singing with gratitude in the heart, so there must be joyful harmony within the family of God. It is for this reason that Paul writes earlier: "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. [2] Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. [3] Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (**Ephesians 4:1-3**). Whether one is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, president of a university or garbage collector, one can only accomplish unity among God's people by "being submissive" (υΣποτασσοψμενοι, Jupotassomenoi, "being subject") to "one another in the fear of the Lord" (**5:21**).

It is in this same vein that Paul writes in the Roman Epistle as he defines one's act of spiritual worship—"to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—that is your spiritual act of worship" (**Romans 12:1**). In this discussion of what this "spiritual act of worship" means, he enumerates many qualities that develops this thought, but the one quality that this essay wishes to emphasize is found in **verse 10**: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." Peter, too, cautioned those who were shepherds over God's family (not over in the sense of rulers, but of leaders) to exercise caution in guiding God's people as examples of godly behavior:

> To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: [2] Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; [3] not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. [5] Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."[a] [6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time (**1 Peter 5:1-7**).

This subject of humility permeates the writings of Paul. In his Philippian Epistle, he uses Christ as an example of the kind of meekness that Christians should manifest toward one another. Pay attention to Paul as he drives home this point of surrender:

> If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [2] then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the

same love, being one in spirit and purpose. [3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. [4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (**Philippians 2:1-4**).

Is there tenderness and compassion in your day-to-day walk with God? Do you consider others better than yourself? Do you just look out for number one, of do you look out for others? Do you look down on others who are not in your social status? Is your life filled with meekness? Is your life overflowing with gentleness? How do you respond to these questions? Paul gives Christ as a pattern that Christians should emulate in their dealings with others. Listen to Paul as he uses the greatest example of humility in the universe:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: [6] Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, [7] but made himself nothing, taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross (**2:5-8**)!

Shortly before His death upon the Cross, Jesus had to deal with this subject of submission. Some of the disciples wanted places of preeminence in the kingdom. When the other ten learned of this plot, they were indignant (**Matthew 20:20-24**). It was then that Jesus called them together and said:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. [26] Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, [27] and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— [28] just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (**20:25-28**).

The words that Jesus employs in this pericope (unit) is quite revealing. He refers to the "rulers" (α[ρχοντε̈, arcontes) of the Gentiles as leaders who actually "lord it over" (κατακυριευψουσιν, katakurieuousin) them and that their high officials "exercise authority over" (κατεξουσιαψζουσιν, katexousiazousin) them. This Scripture is quite revealing concerning the true nature of behavior in God's kingdom. Christ did not "come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." God's leaders are not rulers. They cannot "exercise authority over them" nor can they "lord it over" God's people. Paul's example of Christ in **Philippians 2:1-11** and Peter's admonition in **1 Peter 5:1-7** should humble every believer to serve, not to lord it over others.

Shortly after Jesus' rebuke of His disciples, He again calls attention to the desire for preeminence among God's people. Matthew lists these seven woes against the religious leaders as he brings his Book to a close. Take notice once more to Jesus as He focuses in on one of these seven woes against the religious leaders for their hypocrisy:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. [3] So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do

not practice what they preach. [4] They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. [5] "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries[a] wide and the tassels on their garments long; [6] they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; [7] they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' [8] "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. [9] And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. [10] Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ.[b] [11] The greatest among you will be your servant. [12] For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (**22:2-12**).

CONCLUSION

One's reflection upon Paul's admonition to "be filled with the Spirit" should revolutionize one's ethical conduct to God's glory. One who is filled with the Spirit will not allow alcohol to control his or her life. One who is filled with the Spirit will not participate in lewd songs, but rather will take part in spiritual hymns, psalms, and songs to God's glory. One who is filled with the Spirit will sing and play wholeheartedly to the Lord. One who if filled with the Spirit will become servant to others in God's kingdom. One who is filled with God's Spirit will put on the fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (**Galatians 5:22-23**). One who is filled with the Spirit will put off the acts of the sinful nature as described in **Galatians 5:19-21.** In this section Paul enumerates actions that fails to allow the Spirit to fill one's life:

> The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; [20] idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions [21] and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

If one wishes to understand what it really and truly means to be filled with the Spirit, one should begin his or her reading with **Ephesians 4:17** and conclude with **6:20** to fully grasp what determines whether one is or is not filled with the Spirit. Are you filled with the Spirit of God? Listen, all over again, to the words of Paul:

> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. [19] Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, [20] always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [21] Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (**5:18-21**).

[1]All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

[2]*The NET Bible; Bible. English. NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2003; 2003, CD).

e Or *mind set on the flesh*

f Or *the mind set on the flesh*

[3]Bratcher, Robert G., and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, Originally published under title: A translator's handbook on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.1983, UBS handbook series; Helps for translators, Eph 5:18 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 135.

[4] S. D. F. Salmond, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* in Robertson Nicoll, Editor, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 3:363.

[5] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (originally published as *God's New Society*, 1979, Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 205.

[6] Ibid., 206.

[7] Salmond, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 363.

[8] T. K. Abbott, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 162.

[9] R. C. H. Lenski, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Commentary on the New Testament (originally published in 1937; Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 620-621.

27 [27] **tn** See BDAG 1096 s.v. ψάλλω.

28 [28] **tn** Or "with."

[10]Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible; Bible. English. NET Bible.*, Eph 5:19, Biblical Studies Press, 2003; 2003.

[11]Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Board of Trustees, Catholic Church. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and United States Catholic Conference. Administrative Board. *The New American Bible : Translated from the Original Languages With Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources and the Revised New Testament*, Eph 5:19, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1996, c1986.

[12]*The Holy Bible : New International Version*, Eph 5:19. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984.

[13]Stern, David H. *Jewish New Testament : A Translation of the New Testament That Expresses Its*

Jewishness. 1st ed., Eph 5:19. Jerusalem, Israel; Clarksville, Md., USA: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1989.

[14]*The Revised Standard Version*, Eph 5:19. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971.

[15]*Contemporary English Version*. electronic ed., Eph 5:19.

[16] John R. W. Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1964), 44.

[17] Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Ephesians* in *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 1295/

b Some early manuscripts *from a pure heart*

a 4,5 Or *sight in love. He*

[18] Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 480.

a Prov. 3:34

a Or *in the form of*

b Or *the form*

a That is, boxes containing Scripture verses, worn on forehead and arm

b Or *Messiah*

God Is a Lover of Music: Psalms 150

Thrust Statement: **Psalms 150 is a dramatic call for self-abandonment to God.**

Scripture Reading: **Psalm 150; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**

Psalm 150 is a psalm calling for praise. Praise is the obligation and gladness of all creation. Praise is not only a human necessity and a human requirement, but it is also a human delight. One's praise to God is one's response to His power and mercy. It is inappropriate not to praise God. God should be praised because He is God. Praise does its work among humans as much as it does among the heavenly host. **Psalm 150** is the fifth in the group of Hallelujah psalms that conclude the book of Psalms. **Psalms 150** is enclosed by "Praise the LORD" (**vv. 1, 6**).[1] Sandwiched between the beginning and end of this Psalm, one observes ten imperatives—"praise God" is employed once and "praise him" is utilized nine times.

This Psalm as well as the preceding four calls upon God's people to praise Him with all kinds of instruments. For instance, six imperatives occur within three verses in which several musical instruments are employed in praise to the LORD:

> 3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
> praise him with the harp and lyre,
> 4 praise him with tambourine and dancing,
> praise him with the strings and flute,
> 5 praise him with the clash of cymbals,
> praise him with resounding cymbals (**Psalm 150:3-5**).

An analysis of the Psalm reveals that the Psalmist tells who is to be praised: "Praise the LORD" (**v. 1**); next, the Psalmist reveals why He is to be praised: "Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness" (**v. 2**); then, who is to praise Him: "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD" (**v. 6**). And, finally, How should God be praised? The Psalmist does not leave this to the imagination. He tells how he is to be praised—the LORD is to be praised with music (**vv. 3-5**).

PRAISE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

One can say that God is a lover of music. Music is a witness to the power of God. Music has the ability to capture the beauty of God's grace and love and to evoke feelings beyond the range of ordinary words. Praise is an outward manifestation of the gratitude of the one's redeemed. Another one of the praise Psalms is quite clear: "Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music (yavlate, [2] psalate, "to touch sharply, to pluck, pull, twitch") to our God on the harp" (**Psalm 147:7**). Singing and making music rekindles devout affection within the souls of men and women. Through melody God is able to convey divine light and warmth into our understanding of the unsearchable riches of Christ. God uses Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as a means of remembrance upon what God has accomplished for sinful man through Jesus.

The Book of Psalms began with an emphasis upon the Torah of the LORD as the way of life and ends with an invitation to "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD" (**v. 6**). **Psalm 150** is a doxology from the beginning to the end. This Psalm begins with *Hallelujah* (Hy: Wll]h', h~l$lW y`h) and ends with *Hallelujah* (Hy:AWll]h', h~l$lW y`h). All creation is summoned to take part. The last five Psalms (**146—150**) are encased with the words: "Let every creature praise his holy name" (**Psalm 145:21b**) and "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD" (**Psalm 150:6**).

As stated above, every half-line begins with an imperative form—"praise":

> [1] Praise the LORD.
>
> Praise God in his sanctuary;
> praise him in his mighty heavens.
> [2] Praise him for his acts of power;
> praise him for his surpassing greatness.
> [3] Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
> praise him with the harp and lyre,
> [4] praise him with tambourine and dancing,
> praise him with the strings and flute,
> [5] praise him with the clash of cymbals,
> praise him with resounding cymbals.
>
> [6] Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
>
> Praise the LORD (**Psalm 150:1-6**).

The Hebrew title for the Book of Psalms is myL!h!t= (f+h]ll]m, "praises"), which is the equivalent of the Greek word yalmoi'" (psalmois). This term, f+h]ll]m, represents much of the contents of the Book of Psalms. The Hebrew word for Psalms is derived from the Hebrew ll~h` (h`l~l, "to praise"), as in *Hallelujah* (Hy: Wll]h', h~l$lW y`h). In the English translations, the Greek word ψαλμοί (psalmos) means "*a twanging* of bow strings or harp strings." [3] Albert Barnes also notes that the Greek word for *psalm* (ψαλμός) is from the Greek word ψάλλω (psallw) meaning

> to touch, to twitch, to pluck—as the hair or beard; and then, to touch or twitch a string, to twang, that is, to cause it to vibrate by touching or twitching it with the finger . . . an instrument for striking the strings of a lyre, as a quill. Hence the word is applied to instruments of music employed in praise, and then to acts of praise in general.[4]

PRAISE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The verb psallw is also employed in the New Testament as expressing praise. The verb psallw has its primary meaning "'to sing' with at least the possible nuance of 'to sing' with instrumental accompaniment."[5] The New Testament writers employ the word ψαλμός (psalmos) in two senses: (1) the Old Testament psalms, and (2) songs of praise and joy.[6] For example, Paul in writing to the Romans declares:

> For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise (yalw' psalw, "I will sing praise"[7]) you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name" (**Romans 15:8-9**).

By the use of the word *psalmos*, Paul is not excluding instruments, even though the singing may be without musical accompaniment. The citation, in **Romans 15:9**, is from **Psalm 18:49**, which appears to be a Psalm sung with instruments. This statement of Paul is about Christ's ministry to the Jews to confirm God's mercy to the Gentiles. Just as David praised God for his victory over the surrounding nations, so Christ celebrates His victory over satanic powers that brings about redemption for the Gentiles.

Because of God's mercy, Jesus is saying, "I will praise (yalw' psalw) you among the Gentiles," and "I will sing hymns to your name." This is not related just to the congregational gathering of the corporate body of believers, but also to individuals in their every day walk with God. This perception of God's mercy is one of the reasons that Christians sing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. This outburst of joy, assembled or not assembled, is to praise God for His mercy. Paul's and Silas' singing in prison is an example of this explosion of joy in song to God (**Acts 16:25**). Do you praise God in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs because of His mercy? Do you praise God for His spiritual blessing made available through Christ? Prior to Paul calling upon the Ephesians to "sing and make music," he burst forth in rapturous language to capture the hearts of men and women in gratitude.

> Praise (EujloghtoV", euloghtos, "blessed") be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the

> One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (**Ephesians 1:3-14**).

Ephesians 5:19 is reminiscent of the praise in **Ephesians 1:3-14**.

Again, one also finds the word psallw employed by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I also will pray with my mind; I will sing (yalw' psalw, "I will sing praise") with my spirit, but I will also sing (yalw' psalw, "I will sing praise") with my mind" (**1 Corinthians 14:15**). As one reflects upon this verse, one is conscience that the word yallw' (psallw, "to pluck, pull") is employed in the Septuagint (LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament—translated between 285—250 BCE) to translate the Hebrew word /g^^n` (n`g~n, "to play a stringed instrument") and rm~z` (z`m~r, "to make music in praise to God").[8] The usage of psallw in the Septuagint is used to translate the Hebrew word n`g~n twelve times. On the other hand, the word psallw in the Septuagint is used to translate the Hebrew word z`m~r forty times.[9]

Did Paul exclude the use of instruments in his use of the word psallw? Every Christian's life should be one of praise. Every Believer's life should be one of praising God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for God's unsearchable love. In Paul's letters to the Christians in Ephesus and Colossae, he compares the behavior of the unbeliever with the believer. Toward the close of the Ephesus epistle, he writes:

> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing (a[/donte", adontes) and make music (yavllonte", psallontes) in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 5:15-21**).

Many Christians associate **Ephesians 5:19** with public worship, but there is nothing in the context to identify this as an act that only takes place on Sunday morning between 9am and 10am. While this verse no doubt includes activities that take place in the corporate

assembly, the text does not suggest such a restriction.[10] Believers are to instruct one another through psalms (yalmoi'", psalmois), hymns (u{mnoi", Jumois) and spiritual songs (wj/dai'", wdais). Paul encouraged them to "sing and make music." The words *sing and make music* are from the Greek words a[/donte" kaiV yavllonte" (adontes kai psallontes), which is translated by R. C. H. Lenski as "singing and playing."[11]

He further states: "Singing is done by the voice; playing by means of an instrument. ψαλλω means to let a string twang and thus to play a lyre or a harp, and then to play any instrument as an accompaniment to the voice."[12] In other words, the Christians at Ephesus were to "sing and make music."[13] This would be applicable not just to formal (corporate) worship, but also on other occasions. Paul's use of the word Psalms appears to refer to the Old Testament psalms.[14] This is the most logical conclusion, since this book as well as the other thirty-eight books was looked upon as the word of God (see **2 Timothy 3:14-17**).[15]

The writers of the New Testament cite the Psalms frequently. For example, Luke records a conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders in which Jesus cited from **Psalm 110** (**Luke 20:41-44**). Also, Jesus before His ascension called attention to the Psalms in His farewell instructions to the disciples (**Luke 24:44**). Prior to the day of Pentecost, Peter stood before a group numbering about one hundred and twenty and cited from two psalms (**Acts 1:20-21**):

> "For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms,
>
> 'May his place be deserted;
> let there be no one to dwell in it,' [**Psalms 69:25**]
> and,
>
> 'May another take his place of leadership'" [**Psalm 109:8**]

Again, when Paul proclaimed the good news to those in Pisidian Antioch, he cited **Psalm 2:7**: "'You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (**Acts 13:33**). The Book of Psalms is one of the most quoted books in the New Testament. Paul not only instructed the Ephesians to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but he added the phrase, "sing and make music" (a[/donte" kaiV yavllonte" (adontes kai psallontes). Why did Lenski translate the word psallontes as "playing"? Before responding to this question, perhaps it would be helpful to observe what Charles Hodge has written:

> a[/donte" kaiV yavllonte" (adontes kai psallontes), singing and making melody, are two forms of expressing the same thing. The latter term is the more comprehensive; as αι[δειν (aidein, "to sing"—RD Burdette) is to make music with the voice; ψαλλειν (psallein, "to play"—RD Burdette), to make music in any way; literally, to play on a stringed instrument; then, to sing in concert with such an instrument; then, to sing or chant. See 1 Cor. 14, 15; James, 5, 13; Rom. 15, 9.[16]

Is there any evidence for translating the word psallontes as "playing"? To help solve

the problem of translation, it would be helpful to examine a passage in First Samuel in which David was summoned to comfort Saul:

> Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp (r/NKiB' ÷G«n"m], m+n~gg}n B~kkh!nnor). He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you , will feel better." So Saul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays well and bring him to me." One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play (÷G«n" ['deyœ y) d}~a n~gg}n) the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him" (**1 Samuel 16:14-18**).

The Hebrew words in First Samuel: "can play the harp" is translated into the Greek text as eijdovta yavllein ejn kinuvra/[17] (eidota psallein en kinura, "skilled to play on the harp"). The Greek word psallein ("to play") is equivalent to the Hebrew word m+n~gg}n ("play"). Then the phrase "know how to play" (y)d}~a n~gg}n) is translated into the Septuagint Greek text as eijdovta yalmovn (eidota psalmon, "understands playing on the harp"). Thus, when Paul told the Ephesians to engage in adontes ("singing") kai psallontes ("psalming"), he is utilizing a word (psallontes) that the Jewish Christians in Ephesus understood.[18]

The believers at Ephesus were encouraged to "sing and play," frequently translated as "make melody." Since the Septuagint was the Bible utilized by Jesus and the apostles, it is logical that they would have employed the word psallontes as the Jews currently understood it. The translators of the Septuagint utilized the Greek word psalmon ("playing on the harp") to express the Hebrew word m+n~gg}n ("play"). When Paul says, "sing and make music," is he not reflecting upon musical composition associated with the Psalms?

It is significant, at least to this author, that Paul, in the Ephesian epistle, unlike the Colossian epistle, adds an additional thought. In the Ephesian letter, he says to "sing and make music," but in the epistle to the Colossians, he only says, "sing." Consider the following parallel:

EPHESIANS 5:19-20	**COLOSSIANS 3:16-17**
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.	Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Does the phrase "sing psalms" in Colossians convey the same admonition that Paul expresses in "sing and make music"? The word "sing," even today does not exclude "making music" through instruments. It is not uncommon for individuals to invite someone to go and hear individuals—quartets—sing, but it is understood that just the mention of the word "singing" does not exclude mechanical music. "Make music" is a common term among musicians to mean to "play" instruments along with their singing.

Paul says that this singing and making music is to be "in your heart to the Lord." How were they to give thanks? Paul says with "singing and playing." But, Paul added the prepositional phrase, "in your heart to the Lord." In other words, this singing and playing on instruments should not be mechanical. It is to be done with your hearts, that is to say, not merely with your lips and with your fingers. One sings and plays with his heart when he excites his mind to an understanding of the sentiments presented in the words repeated.

This thought—in your heart—is very similar to the words of Paul, as cited above, to the Corinthians: "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind" (**1 Corinthians 14:15**). Paul is saying, in essence, that the whole of men and women should be filled with praise. The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs should be sung with a spirit of thankfulness, which spirit permeates the believer's singing and playing—corporately or individually.

PRAISE: EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE

In **Psalm 1**, the Psalmist calls attention to an openness to the instructions of God's law. In **Psalm 2**, David is calling upon all to recognize God's sovereignty. One cannot read **Psalm 2** without coming away with the idea that praise is the offering of one's whole life and self to God. With this introduction to the Book of Psalms, it is fitting that this book ends with an enthusiastic invitation to all creation to yield themselves to God.[19] Is it any wonder that Paul calls attention to the necessity of worshiping God through presenting of one's life in service to God? Listen to Paul as he reflects upon what it is all about:

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (**Romans 12:1-2**).

CONCLUSION

Praise involves every aspect of life, which includes liturgy (activities engaged in for corporate worship and edification). If one is gathered with the people of God as a corporate body, then the liturgy should be participated in with all your heart. **Psalms 150** clearly indicates that the praises offered to God are meant to be sung with the accompaniment of musical instruments. As stated earlier, praises with the accompaniment of musical instruments witnesses to the power of music and its amazing potential for evoking deep feelings of gratitude to the Lord. Is it any wonder that the "four living creatures and the twenty-four elders" praised God through singing and playing the harp in their delight over

the accomplishments of Jesus for the salvation of lost humanity? Listen to the words of John as he describes this awesome burst of praise in heaven:

> And when he had taken it (the scroll), the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:
>
> "You are worthy to take the scroll
> and to open its seals,
> because you were slain,
> and with your blood you purchased men for God
> from every tribe and language and people and nation.
> You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
> and they will reign on the earth" (**Revelation 5:8-10**).

But this singing and playing was not all! John reveals more about the magnitude of praises for what Jesus had accomplished through the shedding of His blood:

> Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:
>
> "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
> to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
> and honor and glory and praise!"
>
> Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:
>
> "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
> be praise and honor and glory and power,
> for ever and ever!"
>
> The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped (**5:11-14**).

If God allows harps to be employed in heaven to sing about the blood of the Lamb, why should one think it is inappropriate to sing on earth with instruments to stir the emotions and ecstasy over the One "who sits on the throne"? Is this the reason that Paul told the Christians at Ephesus to "sing and make music" with all their hearts to the Lord? One cannot help but reflect upon this heavenly praise without understanding why Paul told the Ephesians to: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 5:19-20**).

Psalms 150 is a dramatic call for self-abandonment to God. It is a yielding of self, not only in liturgy, but also in every moment of life. God wills that every area of one's life be a symphonic demonstration of praise—" Praise the LORD" (**150:1**). All creation is invited to take part. What majesty in this close—"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD" (**150:6**). **Revelation 5:13** is an echo of what the Psalmist shouted:

> Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!."

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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

[2] *Septuaginta*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1979. Yavlate is a verb—second person, plural, aorist, active, indicative—from yavllw.

[3] J. B. Payne, "Book of Psalms," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 4, Merrill C. Tenney, General Editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 925.

[4] Albert Barnes, *Psalms* (London: Blackie & Son, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker 1998, ix (page references are to reprint edition).

[5] Ralph W. Harris, Executive Editor, *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary: Sigma—Omega, Word Numbers 4375—5457*, vol., 16 (Springfield, Missouri: The Complete Biblical Library, 1986), 541.

[6] See Ibid., 542.

[7] The verb is first person, singular, future, active, indicative and means "to pull, twitch, twang, or play."

[8] Ibid., 541.

[9] Ibid.

[10] See Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 394.

[11] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians, Commentary on the New Testament* (St. Paul Minnesota: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937; reprint Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1998, 620 (page references are to reprint edition).

[12] Ibid.

[13] See James Moffatt, *The New Testament: A New Translation* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1950), where he translates Ephesians 5:19-20:

> Converse with one another in the music of psalms, in hymns, and in songs of the spiritual life, praise the Lord heartily with words and music, and render thanks to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ at all times and for all things.

[14] See Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 169, where he says,

> ψαλμοῖς (psalmois) may refer to OT psalms or songs, ὑμνοϊ (jj&umnois) to NT hymns about Christ or Christian canticles, and ωςδαῖς (wdais) to spontaneous hymnody—songs from Scripture, songs about Christ, and songs from the Spirit. Also, since ψαλλω (psallw) originally meant "pluck a stringed instrument," ψαλμοψς (psalmos) could allude to musical accompaniment (cf. Moffatt, "with the music of psalms"; Turner, Words 353).

[15] For a more detailed study of the relevance of the Law to the believer, see Dallas Burdette's sermon: "Delight in the Law of the Lord: Psalm 1."

[16] Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 305.

[17] *Septuaginta*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1979.

[18] See Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 1295, where they comment on the word "psalm" and "making melody":

> **psalms**—generally accompanied by an instrument. . . . **Making melody**—Greek, "playing and singing with an instrument." **In your heart**—not merely with the tongue; but the serious feeling of the heart accompanying the singing of the lips (cf. I Cor. 14:15; Ps. 47:7).

See also Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians" in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Chariot victor Publishing, 1983), where he comments on the meaning of the words "making melody":

> First is communication with **one another with psalms** (psalmois, OT psalms sung with stringed instruments such as harps), **hymns** (&umnois, praises composed by Christians), **and spiritual songs** (a general term). Second is communication with **the Lord** by *singing* and *making melody* (psallontes, singing with a stringed instrument) **in the heart**.

See also Alfred Martin, "Ephesians" in Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, Editors, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 1314, where he writes about the Greek participle translated as "making melody":

> **Psalms**. This word usually indicates songs set to instrumental accompaniment, as does also the participle translated **making music** (psallontes).

[19] I am deeply indebted to J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *Psalms* in Leander E. Keck, Senior New Testament Editor, *1 & 2 Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms: The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol., 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 1278-1280. This work is not only scholarly, but it is also very practical. I highly recommend to everyone reading this sermon to purchase ($70.00) this commentary.

Singing and Playing: Ephesians 5:19

Thrust statement: **Paul exhorts Christians to sing and play to the Lord.**

Scripture reading: **Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16**

> We are heirs of the "Fathers," of medieval theologians, of the Reformers, and of the Puritans. To deny such inheritance is to deny our faith. But to claim a historic faith also means to claim one that is constantly moving toward God's future, and therefore we must learn to claim our inheritance in such a way that it is a help rather than a hindrance in our march toward the future. In other words, we must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to us. To do this in the case of Scripture is the primary task of a preacher of liberation. [1]

Within the Churches of Christ, the issue of instrumental music in the so-called worship service is a source of division among equally godly men and women—some in favor, others not. This essay is an analysis of James Burton Coffman's article: "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music."[2] The first part of this study focuses on the principles of interpretation and the last part of this investigation concentrates on the arguments set forth by Coffman against instrumental music. My examination of Coffman's composition is not to question the integrity of this godly man, but rather to scrutinize his points to see if his opinions are compelling in his rejection of instrumental music—a position that most Christians within the Churches of Christ uphold. This paper will focus primarily upon the arguments presented by Coffman, not judgments expressed by others who are also in opposition to instrumental music.

Two Scriptures that many of the Churches of Christ rely upon to uphold their views concerning the rejection of instrumental music surrounds **Ephesians 5:19** and **Colossians 3:16**.[3] These two Scriptures are cited by many well-meaning Christians to substantiate their beliefs that it is sinful for Christians to "sing and play" in the corporate assembly of God's people. Coffman, for example, denies the word *play*, or *make music*, as set forth in **Ephesians 5:19**. He writes: "It is the commandment of Christ through the sacred writers of the New Testament that commands Christians to sing, not to make music."[4] These two passages are frequently viewed as Scriptures to regulate singing without the use of the instrument in a so-called worship service.[5] For one to praise God

with instruments during the gathering of the saints on Sunday morning is tantamount to rebellion against God. In fact, to sing with the accompaniment of instrumental music is high treason against God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. God will send, according to some believers, one to an eternal burning hell if one dares to praise Him or Christ with instrumental accompaniment. According to Coffman, as well as many other Christians, one cannot sing and play, but only sing (a capella).[6]

Ephesians 5:19 is generally interpreted as a "worship service" text.[7] In other words, Paul wrote this text in order to regulate the kind of singing within the assembly, not outside the church. One may praise God with instruments, providing one is not worshipping God during a church service. When the church assembles between the hours of 10am and 11am for Sunday morning worship, the congregations must sing without the accompaniment of instruments, which constitutes one of the five-acts of worship.[8] Why? Some Christians assert that God forbids His people to praise Him with the instrument when they assemble as a corporate body for corporate worship.

Worship: One's Way of Life

Just a perusal of the Book of Ephesians reveals that **Ephesians 5:19** deals with one's way of life twenty-four hours a day, not just Sunday morning worship. If one is to identify with this particular verse, one must first learn the whole book in context before postulating his or her interpretation of **5:19**. If one fails to read this book as a book, one can draw conclusions that are not sound. An understanding of the whole helps one to be aware of the part. The task of every interpreter is to seek to know the one specific meaning intended by the author. An author helps his readers to recognize his meaning through its context. Francis W. Beare correctly calls attention to the context in his exegesis of this passage:

> **19-20**. Spiritual fullness comes to expression in joyful fellowship, in song, in perpetual thanksgiving. The Christian's whole life, when it is given its true direction, moves in the atmosphere of worship. In the context the words cannot refer to the meetings for public worship alone or even primarily, but to everyday social intercourse. The whole expression is modeled on Col. 3:16-17; but **addressing one another** suggest the general relationships of life over a broader area than the "teaching and admonishing" of the Colossians passage.[9]

Also, Theodore O. Wedel, co-author with Bear, draws attention to the error of limiting this text to the "architectural" building and "Sunday worship":

> But here, as so often, we make the mistake of limiting the concept of church and religion to their architectural expression in a house of God or to our Sunday worship. Have we not also parish halls and cottage parlors and a common life of Christian fellowship on weekdays? Must Christian **singing and making melody** be restricted to our rightly decorous worship hours? And as for **giving thanks always for all things unto God**—this can surely find social expression in games and picnics and singing around a campfire.[10]

Wedel also bemoans the travesty of limiting **Ephesians 5:19** to special hours. He writes:

> Is it not a tragic misreading of the Christian faith that all of us are inclined to relegate "religion" to special hours or seasons and to appointed pieties? Churchgoing and prayer hours are a necessity for the Christian life. Woe unto us if we neglect them. They are the time for listening to the word of God which will clarify for us his will. But the doing of his will is both costing and rewarding in the *now* of every day.[11]

INTERPRETATION: CONCEPTUAL GRIDS

Before one embarks upon an analysis of Coffman's essay against instrumental music and an interpretation of **Ephesians 5:19**, a word of caution is given in order to help one approach the text without colored glasses—consciousness of one's traditions as one approaches the text. It is not uncommon for interpreters to impose their own conceptual grids on a text without due reflection. When one approaches the Word of God, one should approach every text with a hermeneutics of suspicion. In other words, one should be conscious of his or her own fallibility in interpreting Scriptures. One's interpretation should always remain the object of suspicion and of critical evaluation. Everyone must have a self-critical stance toward the tendency to impose one's own agenda upon the exposition of Scripture. This is especially true in the interpretation of **Ephesians 5:19**.

For many believers, this Scripture is a verse that regulates corporate singing in an assembly on Sunday morning during a so-called worship service. Through a sleight of hand, this passage is cited in such a way that instrumental music is eliminated from the believer's life of worship or praise, except when it is outside the church building. In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) originated the idea of the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle philosophy simply means: "Each part of a text must be interpreted with reference to the whole; yet the meaning of the whole cannot be grasped without considering the parts."[12]

Interpretation is an attempt to understand the work as a whole by an analysis of its elements.[13] Hermeneutics[14] ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis.[15] Nevertheless, hermeneutics is often used in a much narrower sense to grasp the relevance of ancient works. In other words, it is concerned about the "here" and "now."[16] Hayes and Holiday define exegesis as an attempt "to reach an informed understanding of the text."[17] This essay is an attempt to reach an informed understanding of the text by looking at the whole and then the particular. The traditional interpretation, among many Christians within the Churches of Christ, is so entrenched in the thinking of men and women that many can no longer distinguish between tradition and the Word of God itself. Everyone should weigh carefully his or her tradition in the light of God's Word. Jaroslav Pelikan calls attention to the necessity of rethinking cherished traditions:

> Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[18]

It is possible for an interpreter to miss the point of the text if he or she does not consider the "linguistic, cultural, and historical background to the inspired writings,"

writes Cedric Johnson.[19] It is also in this vein that Berkhof cautions Christians not to fall into the same trap that many fell into during the Reformation. L. Berkhof again sharpens the focus of caution when he writes:

> The militant spirit of the age found expression in hundreds of polemical writings. Each one sought to defend his own opinion with an appeal to Scripture. *Exegesis became the handmaid of dogmatics, and degenerated into a mere search for proof-texts.* The Scriptures were studied in order to find there the truths that were embodied in the Confessions.[20]

EXAMINATION OF BURTON COFFMAN'S ESSAY

As stated above, this examination of Coffman's article is not to question the sincerity of this man of God. The primary purpose is to help individuals who are struggling with this issue, to make a more accurate interpretation of **Ephesians 5:19** in order to bring about more unity among God's people. To set the tone for a clearer understanding of **Ephesian 5:19**, I have chosen to review Coffman's article written against the use of the instrument in praise to God.[21] His essay is chosen as an example to illustrate the lengths that individuals will resort to in order to uphold one's own "interpretative community." It is obvious that Coffman allows tradition to stand in the way of listening anew to the biblical texts. Every interpreter must exercise caution that he or she does not prune or crop the text to fit one's theological presuppositions. Every believer must learn to reinterpret and to reevaluate the customs handed down through the centuries. It is not uncommon for Christians to identify the traditions of their "interpretative community" with the Word of God itself. It is in this regard that Johnson expresses the basic problem well in his discussion of presuppositions:

Generations of scholars in the field of hermeneutics have recognized the influence of preunderstanding on interpretation. C. S. Lewis observed "What we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience."[22]

Christians often accept what they are taught without question. It is in this sense that their interpretation is neither subjective nor objective. In other words, they have never taken the time to employ their minds subjectively in analyzing the Scripture for themselves, nor have they looked at the Scriptures objectively. Their interpretations are "ready-made or prefabricated meanings."[23] Their interpretations are hand-me-downs from their interpretative community. It is in this same vein that Stanley Fish rightly says, "In other words, interpretive communities[24] are no more stable than texts because interpretive strategies are not natural or universal, but learned."[25] In spite of Fish's deconstruction philosophy, nevertheless, he is correct when he writes:

> And, moreover, the way of seeing, whatever it was, would never be individual or idiosyncratic, since its source would always be the institutional structure of which the "see-er" was an extending agent. This is what Sacks means when he says that a culture fills brains "so that they are alike in fine detail"; it fills them so that one's interpretive acts are exclusively his own but fall to him by virtue of his position in some socially organized environment and are therefore always shared and public.[26]

Leaders, especially minister within the Churches of Christ, often memorize verses from the Bible by the hundreds. But frequently their interpretation is not so much theirs, as it is the interpretation of a social structure to which they belong; that is to say, their interpretative community. Traditions still stand in the way of listening anew to the Biblical text.[27] Once more, the Gonzalezs' caution: "We must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to us."[28] It is still very difficult for individuals to conceive that one might cite Scripture and, at the same time, fail to apply the text correctly in light of its historical background. It is also in this vein that O. E. Payne writes about the acceptance of arguments against instrumental music without regard to an examination of long-held traditions:

> Most men in like positions, instead of dismissing prejudice and divesting themselves of the warp and woof of long years of custom and environment, preparatory to open-minded research, have passionately rushed to the defense of that to which they have been accustomed, resorting to the Scriptures with no loftier purpose than to search for proof or pretext with which to bolster the doctrine or practice which is questioned.[29]

Some religious writers within the Churches of Christ suppose they have all the answers. And as a result of this kind of intellectualization, the intellectually correct party ostracizes those who go against the grain with their particular interpretative community. One must be careful that one does not go to the Scriptures to prove what one already believes, but rather to see what they say. Many are so accustomed to reading the Bible as previously taught by generations of interpreters that they cannot distinguish between interpretation and Revelation. In other words, for one to question the traditional interpretations is tantamount to questioning the Word of God itself.[30]

This failure to discriminate between explanation and Divine inspiration is one of the main obstacles that believers encounter in their efforts to liberate the Bible from its culture and to maintain unity among God's people. The heritage of explaining is confused with the text itself. The faith of the fathers becomes the watchword for orthodoxy; the interpretation of the fathers becomes normative and is passed on as authoritative. One of the most difficult obstacles for any Christian is to approach the text without any strong personal biases. Studying the Bible with colored glasses ultimately leads to distortion of the text.[31]

People often tend to give preconceived beliefs the same authority as they give to the Bible. In other words, one's preconceived political power is equal to that of the Scriptures. One's own personal journey of faith, with the ghosts of the past, makes it very difficult for one to view the Scriptures without prejudice. One's prior understanding and interpretation makes it difficult to sift out the truths of God in dealing with the text.[32] The culture of one's heritage controls the text of the Bible. One should never forget that one's own journey occurs within a vast architecture of preunderstanding—no thinking takes place in a vacuum. Frederic W. Farrar draws attention to the religious hatred that generates from this know-it-all attitude:

> My opinions are founded on interpretations of Scripture. Scripture is infallible. My views of its meaning are infallible too. Your opinions and inferences differ

from mine; therefore you must be in the wrong. All wrong opinions are capable of so many ramifications that any one who differs from me in minor points must be unsound in vital matters also. Therefore all who differ from me and my clique are "heretics." All heresy is wicked; all heretics are necessarily wicked men. It is my religious duty to hate, calumniate and abuse you.[33]

ANALYSIS OF JAMES BURTON COFFMAN'S "THE SINFUL USE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC"

Pagan Society: First and Fourth Arguments

Coffman's first and fourth arguments against instrumental music surrounds paganism. Since the pagans used instruments in their gatherings, therefore, God and Christ do not approve instruments in either the Old Testament or New Testament, according to Coffman.[34] Having set forth the basic principles of how to interpret the Word of God, as discussed above, it is now appropriate to examine Coffman's essay to see if he followed the fundamental principles of interpretation or if he allowed his prejudices to blind his eyes to a careful reading of **Ephesians 5:19**. Since his arguments are presented in written form in the *Gospel Advocate*, it is appropriate to deal with his views in order to see if his arguments are sound logically and biblically. Many Christians do not have the background of knowing how to deal with his outlook. Since, I, too, taught many of these same views for over seventeen years in the early part of my ministry among the one-cup and nonSunday School movement, I am qualified to examine the arguments—positive or negative. On the surface his points of view may seem sound, but, at the same time, a closer examination reveals carelessness on his part in the handling of several texts to support his presuppositions.

As stated above, this analysis of Coffman's article in no way questions his integrity and his sonship to God. But a perusal of his essay does illustrate the scale to which Christians will violate the text, even though not intentionally, in order to uphold tradition. His approach against instrumental music is extremely weak—even to the point of denying that God commanded musical instruments in **2 Chronicles 29:25**.[35] He begins his tirade against "mechanical musical instruments in the worship of God" by calling attention to its use in a pagan society. He states rather boldly his opposition: "Is the use of instrumental music in Christian worship sinful? Certainly! There is not the slightest doubt of this."[36] How does he conclude that instrumental music is sinful? He states categorically his objection with absolute certainty of its sinfulness. Listen to him as he prepares his readers for his examination, "Let us examine a few of the basic facts that underlie such a certainty."[37]

How does he know for certain that his views are correct? Pay attention to him as he seeks to justify his negative reaction to the use of instruments. His first argument almost causes one to just stand in shock as he or she peruses his reasoning—pagans used instruments. This argument almost shocks the imagination. This argument is one of the weakest arguments against instrumental music that has ever come to my attention. In the development of this argument, he calls attention to the use of mechanical instruments of music in pagan temples and Nebuchdnezzar's employment of musical instruments (**Daniel 3:5**). From this he assumes that Jesus forbids the "worship of God with mechanical instruments of music."[38]

Response to Coffman's Pagan Society Argument

Is the use of instruments sinful simply because one finds the employment of mechanical instruments in a secular society? Coffman advances the notion that since instrumental music is utilized in a pagan society, then God condemns the use of the instrument in praise to Him. This argument is extremely weak in the light of God's Word. For instance, one cannot help but wonder about David and his instruments of music utilized in the Temple to praise God. Toward the end of David's life, he called in the leaders of Israel, the priests, and the Levites—a total of thirty-eight thousand men (**1 Chronicles 23:1-2**). Of this number called in by David, four thousand were chosen to "praise the Lord with the musical instruments" that David had "provided for that purpose" (**23:5**).

The Chronicler also reveals that David, together with some of the commanders of the army, set apart "some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Here is the list of the men who performed this service" (**25:1**). The sons of Asaph, the sons of Jeduthun, and the sons of Heman were assigned the task of "thanking and praising the Lord" with the "harp" (**25:2-4**). After the enumeration of the sons of Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman, the Chronicler writes:

> All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king. Along with their relatives—all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD—they numbered 288. Young and old alike, teacher as well as student, cast lots for their duties (**25:6-9**).

If one thinks that God was not behind this use of musical instruments to praise Him, then one only has to read **2 Chronicles 29:25** to quickly see that it was God who instructed David, not a fertile imagination of David's own devising. This chapter records the purification of the Temple by Hezekiah. The Chronicler clearly states: "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD just as his father David had done" (**29:2**). In the recounting of the events that occurred in the purification of the Temple, the author of **Second Chronicles** reveals the use of instruments in praise to God. Listen as he calls attention to the ultimate source of the authority for this action of the introduction of musical instruments:

> He stationed the Levites in the temple of the LORD with cymbals, harps and lyres in the way prescribed by David and Gad the king's seer and Nathan the prophet; this was commanded by the LORD through his prophets. So the Levites stood ready with David's instruments, and the priests with their trumpets. Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. As the offering began, singing to the LORD began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the singers sang and the trumpeters played. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed (**2 Chronicles 29:25-29**).

Contrary to the thinking of Coffman,[39] the Chronicler says that the source of

authority behind the use of the instruments was God Himself: "commanded by the LORD" (**29:25**). How did God command the employment of instruments? Again, the Chronicler says, "through his prophets" (**29:25**). Who were His prophets? The record says that they were David, Gad, and Nathan. Does this sound as if instruments were a stench in the nostrils of God because pagans also employed instruments in their everyday life? In Coffman's efforts to nullify the force of **2 Chronicles 29:25**, he develops two arguments under the caption: "Crooked Efforts to Justify Their Use." He writes,

> 'But they did it in the Old Testament.' All advocates of the use of such instruments in Christian worship invariably quote 2 Chronicles 29:25, which in the common versions does indicate that God commanded their use. In all probability, this verse is a mistranslation because it is not found in the Syriac or Arabic version."

He wants to deny this passage since it does not fit his theology. Should one also discount where the Chronicler says, "The Levites and priests sang to the Lord every day, accompanied by the Lord's instruments of praise" (**2 Chronicles 30:21**). The instruments in **29:25** are called the "Lord's instruments" in **30:21**. Earlier this same Chronicler wrote: "The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the Lord's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the Lord and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, 'His love endures forever'" (**7:6**). Should this verse, too, be eliminated from the Scriptures in order to fit one's objection to instrumental music? **2 Chronicles 7:6** is associated with the dedication of the Temple built by Solomon. Should this Scripture be eliminated from the Bible?

As one examines Coffman's arguments, one quickly observes that this kind of illogical reasoning is the same illogical reasoning that Jesus experienced with the religious leaders in His day over traditions, which ultimately ended in the crucifixion of Jesus. Traditions take precedence over what God has said. Coffman cannot distinguish, so it seems, between his customs and the Word of God. In fact, he nullifies the Word of God through his inherited traditions from the Stone/Campbell Movement. When he writes: "Is the use of instrumental music in Christian worship sinful? Certainly!" Let us examine a few of the basic facts that underlie such a certainty."[40] Once more, how does he prove that instruments of music are sinful?

His first and fourth arguments are, as stated above, one and the same, focus on the pagan use of instruments. He states his opposition in clear terms: "The whole world in Bible times was full of mechanical instruments of music, and the pagan temples were loaded with their orchestras."[41] He thus reasons that God was not behind the use of instruments. Further more, he indicates that God condemned David for the use of instruments—he then based his arguments upon a misapplication of **Amos 5:23** and **6:5**. [42] Is David condemned because He commanded instruments in the Temple? Is God condemned because He commanded David, along with some other prophets, to institute musical instruments in praise to Himself? One wonders if God knew that the pagans were using instruments. Well, perhaps God was sleeping when all this took place! Perhaps, God had not reasoned this issue out very carefully?

The Pattern Concept for a Worship Service: Singing Excludes Instruments

Pattern Theology: Second Argument

His second argument hinges on pattern theology.[43] In other words, "pattern theology" is the belief that God has ordained a worship service with five acts to be performed in a prescribed manner in order for worship to be true worship. For Coffman, worship is "prescriptive," not "descriptive." He views any passage that describes activities in the assembly as prescriptive—five unalterable rituals. For one to deviate from his supposed rituals (acts or elements), one faces the fires of hell. He labors under the impression that objection to instrumental music is based on the New Testament, not tradition as some say. He then seeks to answer the argument that "The banning of mechanical instruments is more of a tradition than something based on Scripture."[44] To refute the argument that the rejection of instrumental music is based on tradition, not Scripture, Coffman then relies upon **Hebrews 8:5** to prove that mechanical instruments are not in harmony with the divine pattern for a worship service: "It is the New Testament, not tradition, that prescribes a pattern for Christian worship (Hebrews 8:5)."[45]

There is not one word in **Hebrews 8:5** about five acts of worship for a Christian assembly. This deduction is a figment of a very fertile imagination. There is not one Scripture found in the New Testament that speaks of Christian meetings as a worship service. The Christian assemblies appear to be based on the synagogue meetings—meetings in the synagogue were not prescriptive, but descriptive. In other words, they were left open as to the elements/acts of the gatherings. This was not true of the Temple. This passage in **Hebrews 8:5** had to do with the Tabernacle—later Solomon's Temple. On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the instructions to construct the sanctuary—a sanctuary representative, or copy, of what was in heaven--prescriptive.

He assumes that God has prescribed a worship service with five acts to be performed in a prescribed manner, but he cites no Scripture—in context—that supports his conclusions. He cites **Hebrews 8:5** out of context in order to prove his presupposition that God has ordained a pattern for a worship service in the New Testament.[46] After misapplying **Hebrews 8:5**, he then asserts: "Singing is a special kind of music. That special kind of music was only prescribed and allowed by the holy apostles (emphasis mine—RDB)."[47] He discounts **Ephesians 5:19** in which Paul explicitly tells the Ephesians to sing and "make music," or play. He says, "Thus, when the Scriptures say, 'Sing,' it was not necessary to add, 'but don't play musical instruments.'"[48] In this second argument against instrumental music, he drops in this unbelievable statement that also demands a response. One almost stands aghast as one reads his words:

> It is the commandment of Christ through the sacred writers of the New Testament that commands Christians to sing, not make music (emphasis mine—RDB). Only ignorance can confuse these terms. Singing is a special kind of music. That special kind of music only was prescribed and allowed by the holy apostles.[49]

Did Paul exclude the instrument in praise to God? Did he say that the Ephesians were to sing and not to play instruments? Perhaps, a study of The Greek word psallw will clarify the confusion. The verb psallw is employed in the New Testament as expressing praise. The verb psallw has its primary meaning '"to sing' with at least the possible

nuance of 'to sing' with instrumental accompaniment."[50] The New Testament writers employ the word ψαλμός (psalmos) in two senses: (1) the Old Testament psalms, and (2) songs of praise and joy.[51] For example, Paul in writing to the Romans declares:

> For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise (yalw' psalw, "I will sing praise"[52]) you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name" (**Romans 15:8-9**).

By the use of the word *psalmos*, Paul is not excluding instruments, even though the singing may be without musical accompaniment. The citation, in **Romans 15:9**, is from **Psalm 18:49**, which appears to be a Psalm sung with instruments. This statement of Paul is about Christ's ministry to the Jews to confirm God's mercy to the Gentiles. Just as David praised God for his victory over the surrounding nations, so Christ celebrates His victory over satanic powers that brings about redemption for the Gentiles.

Because of God's mercy, Jesus is saying, "I will praise (ψαλῶ' psalw) you among the Gentiles," and "I will sing hymns to your name." This is not related just to the congregational gathering of the corporate body of believers, but also to individuals in their every day walk with God. This perception of God's mercy is one of the reasons that Christians sing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. This outburst of joy, assembled or not assembled, is to praise God for His mercy. Paul and Silas' singing in prison is an example of this explosion of joy in song to God (**Acts 16:25**). Prior to Paul calling upon the Ephesians to "sing and make music," he burst forth in rapturous language to capture the hearts of men and women in gratitude.

> Praise εὐλογητός, euloghtos, "blessed") be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (**Ephesians 1:3-14**).

Ephesians 5:19 is reminiscent of the praise in **Ephesians 1:3-14**. Again, one also finds the word psallw employed by Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I also will pray with my mind; I will sing (yalw' psalw, "I will sing praise") with my spirit, but I will also sing (yalw' psalw, "I will sing praise") with my mind" (**1 Corinthians 14:15**). As one reflects upon this verse, one is conscience that the word yallw' (psallw, "to pluck, pull") is employed in the Septuagint (LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament—translated between 285—250 BC) to translate the Hebrew word /g^^n` (n`g~n, "to play a stringed instrument") and rm~z` (z`m~r, "to make music in praise to God").[53] The usage of psallw in the Septuagint is used to translate the Hebrew word n`g~n twelve times. On the other hand, the word psallw in the Septuagint is used to translate the Hebrew word z`m~r forty times.[54]

Did Paul exclude the use of instruments in his use of the word psallw? There is no evidence from the context that Paul excluded instrumental accompaniment, but rather the reverse is obvious. Every Christian's life should be one of praise. Every believer's life should be one of praising God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for God's unsearchable love. In Paul's letters to the Christians in Ephesus and Colossae, he compares the behavior of the unbeliever with the believer. Toward the close of the Ephesian Epistle, he writes that they were to "sing and make music":

> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing (a[/donte", adontes) and make music (yavllonte", psallontes) in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 5:15-21**).

As stated above, many Christians still associate **Ephesians 5:19** with public worship, but there is nothing, as stated above, in the context to identify this as an act that only takes place on Sunday morning between 9am and 10am. While this verse no doubt includes activities that take place in the corporate assembly, the text does not suggest such a restriction.[55] Believers are to instruct one another through psalms (yalmoi'", psalmois), hymns (u{mnoi", Jumois) and spiritual songs (wj/dai'", wdais). Paul encouraged them to "sing and make music." The words *sing and make music* are from the Greek words a[/donte" kaiV yavllonte" (adontes kai psallontes), which is translated by R. C. H. Lenski as "singing and playing."[56]

Lenski further states: "Singing is done by the voice; playing by means of an instrument. ψάλλω means to let a string twang and thus to play a lyre or a harp, and then to play any instrument as an accompaniment to the voice."[57] In other words, the Christians at Ephesus were to "sing and make music."[58] This would be applicable not just to formal (corporate) worship, but also on other occasions. Paul's use of the word Psalms appears to refer to the Old Testament psalms.[59] This analysis of the Greek and Hebrew words sets forth the argument that this line of reasoning is the most logical conclusion, since this book, as well as the other thirty-eight books, was looked upon as the Word of God (see **2 Timothy 3:14-17**).[60]

The writers of the New Testament cite the psalms frequently. For example, Luke records a conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders in which Jesus cited from **Psalm 110** (**Luke 20:41-44**). Also, Jesus, before His ascension, called attention to the Psalms in His farewell instructions to the disciples (**Luke 24:44**). Prior to the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood before a group numbering about one hundred and twenty and cited from two psalms (**Acts 1:20-21**): "For," said Peter, "it is written in the Book of Psalms, 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' [**Psalm 69:25**] and again he pens: 'May another take his place of leadership'" [**Psalm 109:8**]

Yet again, when Paul proclaimed the good news to those in Pisidian Antioch, he cited **Psalm 2:7**: "'You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (**Acts 13:33**). The Book of Psalms is one of the most frequently quoted books in the New Testament. Paul not only instructed the Ephesians to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but he added the phrase, "sing and make music" (a[/donte" kaiV yavllonte" (adontes kai psallontes), contrary to Coffman's views. To cite Coffman once more, "Only ignorance can confuse these terms."[61] He admits that singing is not the same as to "make music,"
which is correct. A well-known Lutheran scholar (Lenski) translates psallontes as "playing." Why did Lenski translate the word psallontes as "playing"? Before responding to this question, perhaps it would be helpful to observe what Charles Hodge has written:

> a[/donte" kaiV yavllonte" (adontes kai psallontes), singing and making melody, are two forms of expressing the same thing. The latter term is the more comprehensive; as αι[δειν (aidein, "to sing"—RD Burdette) is to make music with the voice;ψαλλειν (psallein, "to play"—RD Burdette), to make music in any way; literally, to play on a stringed instrument; then, to sing in concert with such an instrument; then, to sing or chant. See 1 Cor. 14, 15; James, 5, 13; Rom. 15, 9.[62]

Is there any evidence for translating the word psallontes as "playing"? To help solve the problem of translation, it would be helpful to examine a passage in **First Samuel** in which David was summoned to comfort Saul:

> Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp (r/NKiB' ÷G«n"m], m+n~gg}n B~kkh!nnor). He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you , will feel better." So Saul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays well and bring him to me." One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play (÷G«n" ['deyœ y)d}~a n~gg}n) the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him" (**1 Samuel 16:14-18**).

The Hebrew words in **First Samuel**: "can play the harp" is translated into the Greek text as eijdovta yavllein ejn kinuvra/[63] (eidota psallein en kinura, "skilled to play on the harp"). The Greek word psallein ("to play") is equivalent to the Hebrew word m+n~gg}n ("play"). Then the phrase "know how to play" (y)d}~a n~gg}n) is translated into the Septuagint Greek text as eijdovta yalmovn (eidota psalmon, "understands playing

on the harp"). Thus, when Paul told the Ephesians to engage in adontes ("singing") kai psallontes ("psalming"), he is utilizing a word (psallontes) that the Jewish Christians in Ephesus understood.[64]

The believers at Ephesus were encouraged to "sing and play," frequently translated as "make melody." Since the Septuagint was the Bible utilized by Jesus and the apostles, it is logical that they would have employed the word psallontes as the Jews currently understood it. The translators of the Septuagint utilized the Greek word psalmon ("playing on the harp") to express the Hebrew word m+n~gg}n ("play"). When Paul says, "sing and make music (psallontes)," is he not reflecting upon musical composition associated with the Psalms?

It is significant, at least to this author, that Paul, in the Ephesian epistle, unlike the Colossian epistle, adds an additional thought. In the Ephesian letter, he says to "sing and make music," but in the epistle to the Colossians, he only says, "sing." Consider the following parallel:

EPHESIANS 5:19-20	COLOSSIANS 3:16-17
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.	Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Does the phrase "sing psalms" in Colossians convey the same admonition that Paul expresses in "sing and make music"? The word "sing," even today does not exclude "making music" through instruments. It is not uncommon for individuals to invite someone to go and hear individuals—quartets—sing, but it is understood that just the mention of the word "singing" does not exclude mechanical music. "Make music" is a common term among musicians to mean to "play" instruments along with their singing.

Paul says that this "singing and making music" is to be "in your heart to the Lord."[65] How were they to give thanks? Paul says with "singing and playing." But, Paul added the prepositional phrase, "in your heart to the Lord." In other words, this singing and playing on instruments should not be mechanical. It is to be done with your hearts, that is to say, not merely with your lips and with your fingers. One sings and plays with his heart when he excites his mind to an understanding of the sentiments presented in the words repeated. This expression attached to "singing and playing" is very similar to the words found in **1 Chronicles 13:8** concerning David and assembled Israel in their rejoicing about the return of the Ark of the Covenant: "David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets."

Whether one says, "in your heart to the Lord" or "with all their might," one is saying the same thing. Moses also said to the children of Israel concerning their devotion to God and His Law: "And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but

to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (**Deuteronomy 10:12**). When David exhorted his son Solomon about the building of the temple, he said:

> And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. (**1 Chronicles 28:9**)

Paul, in the Ephesian Epistle, varies this expression in order to drive home the necessity of doing one's "singing and playing" from the soul, not just the mouth. Listen once more to Paul as he addresses the servants of earthly masters: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ" (**Ephesians 6:5**). Again, he writes: "Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart" [ἐκ ψυχῆς, ek yuxhs, "from the soul"] (**6:6**). The words of Peter also call attention to the inward versus the external: "Love one another deeply from the heart" [ἐκ καρδίας, ek kardias] (**1 Peter 1:22**).

This thought—in your heart—is very similar to the words of Paul, as cited above, to the Corinthians: "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind" (**1 Corinthians 14:15**). Paul is saying, in essence, that the whole soul of men and women should be filled with praise. The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs should be sung with a spirit of thankfulness, which spirit permeates the believer's singing and playing—corporately or individually.

Amos and Instrumental Music

Under the caption "Crooked Efforts to Justify Their Use, he develops three additional arguments to substantiate his belief system about instrumental music. His first argument under this caption focuses on **Amos 5:23** and **6:5**). Coffman cites **Amos 5:23** and **6:5** to justify his position that instrumental music is sinful. He writes: "Furthermore, we must point out that Amos condemned the use of instruments in the Old Testament: 'Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols' (5:23; cf. 6:5)."[66] Goebel Music (associated with the Churches of Christ), also makes this same argument against the use of Instrumental music.[67] As one seeks to unravel his convoluted reasoning, it is necessary to call attention to the proper method of exegesis. The task of any interpreter is to discover the intended meaning of the author. The way an author helps his readers to interpret his statements is through his context. If one isolates a passage from its context, one can arrive at a meaning that is totally foreign to the author's intent. If one wishes to understand what Amos meant in a particular verse, the reader must examine the way the author thinks and writes in the verses preceding and following his statements. **Amos 5:23** and **6:5** are anchored in history. One cannot separate the historical setting of the author without destroying the intended message. Is it possible to understand these two texts? Yes, Amos' meaning is available and can be understood from his book. Interpreters need to learn how to read a book as a book. As one seeks to uncover the meaning of any text, one should never read isolated passages divorced from

its historical background. In the examination of these two texts, this study now focuses upon these two verses separately.

Amos 5:23

Amos 5:23 is a favorite text among many Christians within the various subdivisions within the Churches of Christ. Misapplication, in my judgment, is not deliberate on the part of those who cite this verse to give credence to their opposition to instrumental music, but an honest mistake of the heart. An important rule of interpretation of any text is to approach the text with a sound historical treatment. One has to look at the writers of both the Old and New Testaments with a detached eye; that is to say, one must learn to look at the various Scriptures from a neutral standpoint and to see the historical background and to hear the historical Word as it was uttered to the first audience. Many Christians do violence to the historical context in justifying their presuppositions. In the following explanation of this text (**5:23**) as well as **6:5**, one must take into consideration the relevance of the historical details leading up to a particular statement.

There are two different contexts for each of these isolated Scriptures. **Amos 5:23** is associated with the nation of Israel (Northern Kingdom) and **6:5** is associated with both the nation of Judah (Southern Kingdom) and the nation of Israel (Northern Kingdom). Amos writes: "Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps" (**5:23**). The best choirs may have sung their songs, but to God their music was simply noise. The Israelites worship had become meaningless and empty. When one approaches this text with certain presuppositions against instrumental music, this text appears to give validity to one's beliefs.[68] The background leading up to this terse statement deals with ritual punctiliousness, even to the point of excess. Just a casual reading of Chapter 4 and 5 reveals worship that is "soulless worship"—worship that was no longer pleasing to God. God, through Amos, states His opposition to that He had earlier commanded:

> I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. 22 Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,[a] I will have no regard for them. 23 Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! (**5:21-24**).

The nation of Israel had turned their hearts from God, and they were using their "religious feast," their "assemblies," their "burnt offering and grain offerings," their "fellowship offering," and their "instruments" to praise God in a soulless fashion—only mechanical. The Israelites, like so many Christians today, used religion as an emotionless means to stay, hopefully, in God's grace. The Lord is interested in the heart as well as the mind. It is in this same vein that Jesus responded to an individual who tested Him about the greatest commandment in the Law:

> Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'[a] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b] 40 All the Law and

the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (**Matthew 22:37-40**)

The Israelites failed in all three. Fifteen hundred years after Moses penned these words (**Deuteronomy 6:5** and **Leviticus 19:18**), Paul, too, desired the Ephesians to "sing and make music in your heart (τῇ καρδίᾳ, th kardia, "with the heart") to the Lord" (**Ephesians 5:19**). The *Revised Standard Version* renders this phrase as "with all your heart." William Barclay in his *the New Testament: A New Translation* translates: "with all your heart." Edgar J. Goodspeed in his *The Bible: An American Translation* also translates: "with all your heart." Also, James Moffatt in his *The New Testament: A New Translation* renders this phrase as "praise the Lord heartily." The case in Greek can be either dative, locative, or instrumental. The sense of this phrase in context is "with the heart." This sense is also found in a parallel passage in Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (**Colossians 3:16**). Even if one translates th kardia as locative ("in the heart"), the meaning is still "with the heart." Just a comparison of **Colossians 3:16** with Ephesians **5:19** settles the matter—"with gratitude in your hearts."

In the Ephesian Epistle, Paul calls attention to the ethical behavior that a servant should exhibit toward his owner or master. He writes: "doing the will of God from your heart" (**Ephesians 6:6**). The phrase "from your heart" is a translation of the Greek, which is literally translated "from [the] soul" (ἐκ ψυχῆς, ek yuxhs). **Psalm 111:1** also captures the expression ("with all your heart"): "I will extol the LORD with all my heart." When the ark of God was being moved from Abinadab's house on a new cart, the Chronicler pens: "David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets (**1 Chronicles 13:8**). Another psalm of David also expresses the thought of Paul in **Ephesians 5:19**. Listen to David: "I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart" (**Psalm 138:1**).[69]

The context of **Amos 5:23** sets forth God's attitude about observance of the things commanded by Him when one's lifestyle is totally contrary to love—love for God and love for one's neighbor. Many Israelites labored under the impression that if they attended their "solemn assemblies" with their punctilious observance of the rituals commanded by God, then all things would be okay. They failed to understand that what God really desires is the person, not their rituals. Even though the offerings were important aspects of their Levitical heritage, nevertheless, the Lord rejected his own institutions and his instruments of music. These rituals gave its performers a false a sense of security. They had rejected the very heart of the Law. In fact, God taunted them, as it were, to sin:

> "Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years.[b] 5 Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings— boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do," declares the Sovereign LORD (**AMOS 4:4-5**).

Later, God says, "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies" (**5:21**). These activities became the focus of God's hatred because they furthered the false sense of security. One can hardly reflect upon **Amos 5:21** without due deliberation upon the words of Isaiah (739 BC), approximately twenty years later,

concerning the same mindset of God against the southern kingdom of Judah:

> Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations— I cannot bear your evil assemblies. [14] Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (**Isaiah 1:13-14**)

As with Amos (760 BC), so, too, Isaiah (739 BC) gives God's reaction to their rituals, rituals of worship not expressive of emotions of the heart. Both Israel and Judah were lulled into thinking that their religious rituals were fulfilling their religious duties. As observed earlier in this essay, God commanded instruments of music (**2 Chronicles 29:25**) to be employed in the Temple to honor Him. God is not condemning the use of the instrument anymore than He is condemning their offerings. God's rejection of their rituals focused upon their external behavior—behavior that God deplored. They employed their music in a mechanical way as well as their other activities in order to please or appease the God of heaven, so they thought Their worship was not "from the soul." Their worship was "soulless" worship. The people of Israel practiced ritual over heart obedience. God wants worship from the soul/heart, not mere external ritual. The same is still true today. This is why one must sing and make music with all one's heart. What did God want from the Northern Kingdom? Listen to Amos as he reveals the words of God to this apostate nation:

> [12] For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. [13] Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil. [14] Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. [5] Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph. (**5:12-15**)

Amos 6:5

Once more, Amos focuses upon the don't-care attitude (**Amos 6:1**). In this Scripture, he begins with the Southern Kingdom and then, immediately turns his attention to the Northern Kingdom and then back to the Southern Kingdom. Once again, Amos leads up to the use of instruments in their gatherings—their homes. **Amos 5:23** appears to be in a context of Temple worship, but **Amos 6:5** appears to be in a context of one's life outside the Temple. He deals with their sumptuous lifestyles—lives lived in total disregard for the poor. Listen to Amos as the Holy Spirit speaks through him:

> [3] You put off the evil day and bring near a reign of terror. [4] You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. [5] You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. [6] You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. (**6:3-6**)

Just a casual reading of this text reveals the ghastly consequences of surface religion. In **5:18**, Amos pronounced a "woe" on the Northern Kingdom, now he pronounces a "woe" on the Southern Kingdom (**6:1**). In this pericope (**6:1-7**), Amos condemns their luxurious lifestyle—a lifestyle of self-indulgence and gluttony, which was

supported by a reign of terror (**6:3**). This same life of self-indulgence also appeared in the Northern Kingdom. It is in this regard that God called attention to their extravagance at the expense of the common people: "I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished," declares the LORD" (**3:15**). How does this lifestyle coincide with the Southern Kingdom? One reads of their ivory-inlaid beds, drinking wine by the bowls, use of the finest lotions, no feelings for the poor, and no compassion or understanding of the impending judgment of the Northern Kingdom.

It is in this context that Amos mentions musical instruments. In **5:23**, one discovers that God is not pleased with their musical instruments since their worship was hypocritical—performed in order to impress the people with their acts of piety. Now Amos turns his attention to the imitation of musical instruments employed by David, instruments commanded by God. What is the difference between David and the Southern Kingdom leaders who also employed musical instruments? The answer lies in the attitude. In other words, David employed the instruments to God's glory, but, on the other hand, their instruments were used for frivolous songs. David made songs for God's glory, but they made songs to the glory of their feast. These individuals were not serving the Lord but their own appetites. The context of **6:5** is that the songs were "frivolous" in nature. They composed songs and played them on harps as David did. The one was frolicsome; on the other hand, the other was for God's glory. They had, so to speak, their jazz, their rock and roll, and their hard-rock music. There is a proper and an improper use of songs and instruments. One can hardly read Amos 6:1-5 without due reflection upon Paul's admonition to the Christians in Ephesus. Listen to Paul as he addresses the proper use of songs and instrumental music, not drunken songs sung with musical instruments:

> [18] Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. [19] Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, [20] always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (**Ephesians 5:18-20**)

Worship: Relegated to Mere Spectators

This is the third argument under his new caption ("Crooked Efforts to Justify Their Use"). His second contention surrounded **2 Chronicles 29:25**, which is dealt with earlier in this paper. His third quarrel with the use of the instrument is as weak as his other opinions developed in his short essay. He complains that if one allows one to play the instrument, then this moves the so-called worship service from the hands of the church into the hands of professionals.[70] He continues his arguments by writing: "Thus, the congregation's role as participants in the worship is relegated to the status of mere spectators."[71] This argument is extremely off base. If one were to apply this kind of rationale, then one would have to stop one person from preaching and another individual from leading in prayer, or another person from leading the singing; otherwise, according to Coffman, the "worship is relegated to the status of mere spectators.

This whole subject of worship needs a theological overhaul by the Christian community. The Churches of Christ need to rethink the traditional concept of worship.

Believers must reanalyze the question: What Is Worship? It is true that in corporate worship, one is to be active, not passive. Having said this, one must also realize that participation is not always actually participating by outward visible performance. For example, one can attend a Christian assembly and participate without actually performing in the activity in a visible way. Is this a contradiction? No! For instance, one can participate by paying attention and involving himself or herself in the activity, which is passive participation. The only kind of singing mentioned in the New Testament in an actual assembly is found in First Corinthian 14. This singing is solo singing, not congregational singing. Even though only one person sings, nevertheless, there is still broad participation by all, even though passive in nature. The same is true when one or several play instruments; there is still broad participation, even though passive in nature.

This kind of participation also includes the way one responds to other activities that occur in the assembly. Even though a congregation usually has only one person to address the congregation, still the congregation involves itself through the way it thinks and receives the message. In the heart one plays a part in all the activities, even though one does not actively engage in the solo, preaching, prayers, and so on. When God reaches one's heart in sensitivity to the spirit-filled preaching and prayers, one still joins in the actions, even though listening is passive in nature. It is not correct to say the congregation has relegated its activities to the "spectator" status.

CONCLUSION

All the arguments against instrumental music by Coffman are based upon a so-called worship service, which is based on the philosophy of "pattern theology. If God has not ordained a worship service with five prescribed rituals, then his position about the sinfulness of instrumental music is null-and-void. " The issues presented by James Burton Coffman[72] focuses on a so-called worship service on Sunday morning—usually about one hour. The current concept of worship is one of the great obstacles to unity among God's family today. Christians are divided over something that the New Testament never addresses. The Scriptures never legislate concerning certain rituals to be carried out in a so-called worship service—a service with five prescribed rituals that have to be executed in a precise manner.[73] The New Testament does not use a worship formula for the Christian assembly, or meeting. In 1977, Dwaine Dunning debated Rubel Shelly over the use of the instrument in the Christian assembly. In this debate, Dunning successfully argued that all Shelly's arguments were null-and-void since the New Testament never ordained a worship service for the Christian community.[74]

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[1] Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 31.

[2] James Burton Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music," *Gospel Advocate* 137, no. 10 (October 1995): 20. In spite of the fact that I am dealing with his arguments, this essay is not written to impugn his integrity or his sonship to God. Even though we disagree over the instrument, I still regard Coffman as a sincere child of God—one that has eternal life in and through Jesus the Messiah.

[3] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version*, unless stated otherwise.

[4] James Burton Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music," 29.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid

[7] To illustrate this mindset, the late E. H. Miller (1909-1989), my uncle, wrote an essay, in 1945, entitled, "The Establishment of the Church," in which he enumerated the so-called five-acts of worship as the identifying marks of a true church. See "The Establishment of the Church," in Homer L. King, *Old Paths Advocate*, ed. Homer L. King (Lebanon, Missouri: Old Paths Advocate, 1945), 70, where Miller writes:

> We cannot escape seeing that in the above five items of worship, simplicity is an outstanding characteristic of the church established by our Lord, just as he has shown in all his teaching and examples in his own life and work.

[8] The above citation from the late E. H. Miller is also advanced among other Church of Christ folk other than just among the one-cup and nonSunday school movement. It is advanced by many Christians upon the presupposition that God ordained a worship service with five prescribed rituals, one of which is to sing without the accompaniment of an instrument. It is in this vein that Curtis Cates, Director of the Memphis School of Preaching, writes about the five-acts of worship. See Curtis Cates, *Worship: Heaven's Imperative, OR Man's Innovations* (Memphis, Tennessee: Cates Publications, 1993), 21, where he writes: "Please be assured, dear reader, that there are five items of worship set forth clearly in the New Testament; there is a Divine pattern for worship. The early church engaged in those acts (Acts 2:42)." Then on pages 42-46, he discusses the mechanical instrumental music as a violation of one of the so-called five-acts of worship. This view of worship is still very entrenched into the thinking of God's people, even though one never reads of five-acts of worship in the New Testament. In fact, the New Testament writers never tell Christians to gather for a worship service in order to perform five prescribed rituals, rituals that constitute a "Divine pattern for worship."

[9] Francis W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: Introduction and Exegesis*, *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), 10:714.

[10] Theodore O. Wedel, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: Exposition*, *The Interpreter's Bible* 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), 715.

[11] Ibid., 713, 714.

[12] See Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, "Hermeneutics," *NTC"s Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1991, 97.

[13] Ibid.

[14] See Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 17, where Stein writes: "The term 'hermeneutics,' . . . . simply describes the practice or discipline of interpretation"; see also Thomas H. Olbright, *Hearing God's Voice* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1996), 185, where he says, "In a large sense, hermeneutics constitutes a theory about how one person explains or communicates a text to another."

[15] See Morner and Rausch, "Exegesis," Ibid., 72, 73, where they say, "Originally, the detailed analysis , explanation, and INTERPRETATION of passages in the Bible, or, by extension, of any literary or intellectual text. The term carries with it a sense of digging out the meaning of a difficult passage."

[16] See Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Rand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 25.

[17] John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's handbook, Revised Edition* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1987), 23.

[18] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 60.

[19] Cedric B. Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 20.

[20] L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), 28-29.

[21] See James Burton Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music, *Gospel Advocate* 137, no. 10 (October 1995): 20-22. This saintly man was ninety years old as the time of this writing. Today he has just approached his 100th birthday.

[22] Johnson, *The Psychology of Interpretation*, 45.

[23] See Stanley fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 172, for an excellent presentation of subjective and objective interpretation.

[24] Fish does not use "interpretative community" but "interpretive community."

[25] Ibid. I disagree with Fish's philosophy of the text being unstable. If I understand Fish correctly, he is a deconstructionist in his philosophy. See Morner and Rausch, "Deconstructive Criticism," *NTC's Dictionary*, 50-51, where they explain "deconstruction":

> An approach to LITERARY CRITICISM based on the views and procedures of the French thinker Jacques Derrida. Deconstructive criticism utilizes reader-centered theories of meaning that ignore reference to the author's intention and deny the possibility of a terminate meaning or "correct" interpretation for any text. Deconstructive criticism make possible innumerable contradictory but "undecidable" meanings. First becoming prominent in the 1970s deconstructive criticism is central to POST-STRUCTURALISM.

[26] Fish, *Is There A Text*, 335.

[27] See Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 48-68.

[28] Ibid., 31.

[29] O. E. Payne, *Instrumental Music Is Scriptural* (Hanna, Alberta: Canada, 1920), 17.

[30] For an insightful article on the differentiation between Revelation and interpretation, see Leroy Garrett, "It Means What It Says," *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 68-71.

[31] See Johnson, *The Psychology of Interpretation*, 42, where he captures, in concise language, the subjective biases of all interpreters:

> My contention is that conflicting theological positions are in part due to the fact that we all approach a text, sacred or secular, with our strong subjective biases. Even though we have a commitment to read the Bible on its own terms: and even though we want the Divine and human authors to speak for themselves, somehow we still come up with contradictory views on some issues.

[32] For an insightful article on the differentiation between Revelation and interpretation, see Leroy Garrett, "It Means What It Says," *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 68-71.

[33] Frederick W. Farrar, "Religious Hatred," quoted in Carl Ketcherside, *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 6 (June 1965): 92.

[34] James Burton Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music," *Gospel Advocate* 137, no. 10 (October 1995): 20, 21.

[35] Ibid., 21

[36] Ibid., 20

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 21, where he says, "In all probability, this verse is a mistranslation because it is not found in the Syriac or Arabic versions."

[40] Ibid., 20.

[41] Ibid.

[42]Ibid., 21.

[43] Ibid., 20

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid. See also Dallas Burdette, "Congregational Worship and Division" [ONLINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 18 November 2005], under the caption SERMONS and then, under the subheading WORSHIP, for analysis of the underlying cause of division within the Stone/Campbell Movement—a movement that has divided into at least twenty-five or more warring factions.

[46] See Dallas Burdette, "True Worship" [ONLINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrit.net [accessed 18 November 2005], under the caption SERMONS and then, under the subheading WORSHIP. For an excellent analysis of rethinking the worship concept of five acts, see Mike Root, *Split Grape Juice: Rethinking the Worship Tradition* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1992.

[47] Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music," 21.

[48] Ibid., 22.

[49] Ibid., 20, 21.

[50] Ralph W. Harris, Executive Editor, *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary: Sigma—Omega, Word Numbers 4375—5457*, vol., 16 (Springfield, Missouri: The Complete Biblical Library, 1986), 541.

[51] See Ibid., 542.

[52] The verb is first person, singular, future, active, indicative and means "to pull, twitch, twang, or play."

[53] Harris, *The new Testament Greek-English Dictionary,* 541.

[54] Ibid.

[55] See Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 394.

[56] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians, Commentary on the New Testament* (St. Paul Minnesota: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937; reprint Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1998), 620 [page references are to reprint edition].

[57] Ibid.

[58] See James Moffatt, *The New Testament: A New Translation* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1950), where he translates Ephesians 5:19-20:

> Converse with one another in the music of psalms, in hymns, and in songs of the spiritual life, praise the Lord heartily with words and music, and render thanks to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ at all times and for all things.

[59] See Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 169, where he says,

> ψαλμοῖ (psalmois) may refer to OT psalms or songs, ὑμνοϊ (jj&umnois) to NT hymns about Christ or Christian canticles, and ωςδαῖ (wdais) to spontaneous hymnody—songs from Scripture, songs about Christ, and songs from the Spirit. Also, since ψαλλω (psallw) originally meant "pluck a stringed instrument," ψαλμοψς (psalmos) could allude to musical accompaniment (cf. Moffatt, "with the music of psalms"; Turner, Words 353).

[60] For a more detailed study of the relevance of the Law to the believer, see Dallas Burdette's sermon: "Delight in the Law of the Lord: Psalm 1" [ON-LINE]. Available from http://www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 18 November 2005], under the caption BIBLICAL STUDIES, and then under the subheading OLD TESTAMENT, then under PSALMS.

[61] James Burton Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music," 20.

[62] Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 305.

[63] *Septuaginta*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1979.

[64] See Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 1295, where they comment on the word "psalm" and "making melody":

> **psalms**—generally accompanied by an instrument. . . . **Making melody**—Greek, "playing and singing with an instrument." **In your heart**—not merely with the tongue; but the serious feeling of the heart accompanying the singing of the lips (cf. I Cor. 14:15; Ps. 47:7).

See also Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians" in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Chariot victor Publishing, 1983), where he comments on the meaning of the words "making melody":

> First is communication with **one another with psalms** (psalmois, OT psalms sung with stringed instruments such as harps), **hymns** (&umnois, praises composed by Christians), **and spiritual songs** (a general term). Second is communication with **the Lord** by *singing* and *making melody* (psallontes, singing with a stringed instrument) **in the heart**.

See also Alfred Martin, "Ephesians" in Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, Editors, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 1314, where he writes about the Greek participle translated as "making melody":

> **Psalms**. This word usually indicates songs set to instrumental accompaniment, as does also the participle translated **making music** (psallontes).

[65] This phrase will be examined in detail in Chapter 3 of this series. For now, I want to illustrate that this phrase has to do with one's wholehearted commitment to the Lord. Some sincere Christians cite this phrase, out of context, to justify condemnation of instrumental music.

[66] Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music," 21.

[67] Goebel Music, "The New Testament Commands Us to Use Old Testament Psalms," *The Spiritual Sword* 10, no. 1 (October 1978): 22-27.

[68] This kind of application is what I call Church of Christ hermeneutics. In other words, this brand of hermeneutics isolates Scriptures from its context and then builds its theology upon the so-called book, chapter, and verse citation. This is same kind of interpretation that Satan exercised in his confrontation with Jesus when he cited from Psalm 91:11-12. Satan misapplied the intent of the author, thus Jesus had to correct his application with another Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:16). This author, Dallas Burdette, also cited these two Scriptures in the early years of my ministry. I was not conscious that I, too, had misapplied these Scriptures.

[a] Traditionally *peace offerings*

[a] Deut. 6:5

[b] Lev. 19:18

[69] This phrase ("in the heart"), as rendered in the KJV, will be dealt with more

exhaustively in Chapter 3 of this series.

[b] Or *tithes on the third day*

[70] James Burton Coffman, "The Sinful Use of Instrumental Music," 22.

[71] Ibid.

[72] In concluding my remarks, I again want to stress that I believe that Coffman is a true believer in Jesus as the Savior of the world. He is God's child. When he passes from this life, he will enter the gates of eternity. Unfortunately, this paper is necessary to assist those who read Coffman's essay to understand more clearly the teaching of the Holy Spirit on this subject. His mistake is an honest mistake of the heart, not rebellion against God. Salvation is not contingent upon absolute perfection in knowledge, but rather upon one's acceptance of Jesus as Lord. All error is error but not all error will condemn one's soul, otherwise no one could be saved. All truth is true but not all truth is essential to salvation, otherwise no one could be saved. Am I in fellowship with Christians in error? Yes! What other kind are there?

[73] For a detailed study of worship, see Dallas Burdette's studies on worship, located under www.freedominchrist.net [ON-LIN] under SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under WORSHIP [accessed 24 November 2005].

[74] Rubel Shelly and Dwaine Dunning, *Shelly—Dunning Debate* (William C. Johnson, Inc: West Monroe, Louisiana, 1977).

A Brief History of The One-Cup and Non-Sunday School Movement

January 4, 1999

> Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[1]

INTRODUCTION

A brief history of the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement is essential to a proper understanding of this wing of the American Restoration Movement in the United States with its emphasis upon the common cup in the Lord's Supper and no Bible study classes. This particular segment of the Restoration Movement maintains that it alone is the *true* church of Christ. According to this fellowship of believers, unless a congregation uses one common drinking vessel in the distribution of the fruit of the vine and rejects the modern day Bible study class method of teaching, then one cannot be a *true* child of God or a *true* church. This group of Christians firmly believes that it is maintaining doctrinal purity. This body of believers also maintains that "We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent." Yet, the one-cup movement is still hopelessly divided into many warring factions—each claiming the motto for its own.[2]

A short record of the one-cup campaign within the Churches of Christ sheds light on the philosophy of this viable movement.[3] This branch of the Stone-Campbell movement desires to adhere to the teachings of God as revealed in the New Testament books. This movement is by no means dead. It is very much alive and growing on Planet Earth. Since I am acquainted with many of its major players, it is appropriate that I preserve an epitomized account about this one-cup and non-Sunday school story. This writer knew many of the second-generation advocates of this once very fashionable theory.[4] This distinct doctrine of one-cup and non-Sunday school emphasis is founded, as stated above, upon the principle that "We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent were the Bible is silent."[5]

REFORMATION OBJECTIVES

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

It is not uncommon for Christians within the Churches of Christ to forget that there have been a number of "restoration movements" within the Christian community. Perhaps, it would assist Christians in comprehending their own movement if they perceived the dominant point(s) of other restoration movements. For example, Luther's (1483-1546) reformation concentrated upon the forgiveness of sins, not forms or rituals. His biblical "pattern" was grace through Jesus, not works.[6] Luther wanted to restore the gospel message of divine grace. On the other hand, John Wesley (1703-91) sought to recover holy living. He taught believers to "avoid even the most subtle appearances of evil, shunning fashionable clothing, cursing, drunkenness, sensuous literature, and worldly music, not to mention murder, adultery, lying, and thieving."[7] Out of the Wesleyan movement came the "Holiness" denominations. Allen and Hughes capture the Wesleyan movement's aim: "Daniel S. Warner [1842-1925] and his Church of God (Anderson, Indiana, 1880) is a notable case in point. Warner rejected the denomination pattern out of hand and summoned the true sheep of God out of their denominational structures and into 'the only holy church of the Bible.'"[8]

In order to understand the restoration heritage within the Churches of Christ, one must unearth the original intent of the early reformers. The movement initiated by the Campbells (Thomas [1763-1854] and Alexander [1788-1866] and Barton Stone [1772-1844] was to restore unity "among Christians within the various sects." Their crusade was to revitalize fellowship upon the belief that Jesus is the Christ, not creeds. Their theme was "unity in freedom rather than a unity in conformity; in other words, their motif was "unity in diversity."[9] In the first issue of ***The Christian Baptist***, Campbell writes:

> The societies called churches, constituted and set in order by those ministers of the New Testament, were of such as received and acknowledged Jesus as Lord Messiah, the Saviour of the World, and had put themselves under his guidance. The ONLY BOND OF UNION among them was faith in him and submission to his will. No subscription to abstract propositions framed by synods; no decrees of councils sanctioned by kings; no rules of practice commanded by ecclesiastical courts were imposed on them as terms of admission into, or of continuance in, this holy brotherhood.[10]

But second generation disciples changed the "unity in diversity" to "unity in conformity." As a result of this change of philosophy, "loyal churches" appeared everywhere. Out of this movement originated the "one-cup" and "non-Sunday-school" fellowships. Various brotherhoods within the Churches of Christ multiplied—one on every corner. No conformity, no unity was the battle cry. An example of this type mentality is advanced by a one-cup and non-Sunday school journal (***The Light***): "Where the Bible is silent, we are silent."[11] Out of this religious philosophy came the divisions that now exist within the Christian community. This essay is concerned with one of the "odd" movements that came out of the Stone-Campbell reformation movement—one-cup and non-Sunday school. This paper is not an analysis of the rightness or wrongness of arguments presented by Christians for or against Sunday school or individual communion cups in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Its purpose is only to acquaint believers with the problems Christians face in seeking answers to one's faithfulness to God. Before one embarks upon the history of the one-cup controversy, this paper begins with a brief history of the modern-day Sunday school.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CONTROVERSY

The modern-day Sunday school had its beginning in 1780 under the leadership of Robert Raikes (1735-1811) of Glouchester, England.[12] Though many accepted this innovation, it was not without its opponents. In 1798, Thomas Burns preached two sermons against the introduction of the procedure into Scotland.[13] William Pitt (1708-1778) thought seriously of proposing a bill in Parliament for the purpose of restraining Sunday-schools.[14]

Early Trailblazers

The early trailblazers in the Restoration Movement resisted Sunday schools. But their protest concerned the abuse of the system rather than the system itself. During the early days of Alexander Campbell's ministry, he objected to the mis-use of Missionary Societies, Sunday schools and other hobbies, as these institutions are sometimes referred to, of modern times rather than an indictment of them. He explains:

> Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible societies, and education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world. The head of a believing household was not in those days a president or manager of a board of foreign missions; his wife, the president or manager of a board of foreign missions; his wife, the president of some female education society; his eldest son, the recording secretary of some domestic bible society; his eldest daughter, the corresponding secretary of a mite society; his servant maid, the vice-president of a rag society; and his little daughter, a tutoress of a Sunday School. They knew nothing of the hobbies of modern times. In their Church capacity alone they moved.[15]

In this same vein, Campbell continues to express his disapproval of the Sunday schools as a means of propagating the ranks of sects:

> The Bible cannot be disseminated without their appendages; and if children are taught to read in a Sunday school, their pockets must be filled with religious tracts, the object of which is either directly or indirectly to bring them under the domination of some creed or sect. Even the distribution of the bible to the poor must be followed up with those tracts, as if the bible dare not be trusted in the hands of a layman, without a priest or his representative at his elbow. It is on this account that I have, for sometime, viewed both "Bible Societies" and "Sunday Schools" as a sort of recruiting establishments to fill up the ranks of those sects which take the lead in them.[16]

Nevertheless, in spite of these negative statements, twenty-three years later (1847), his views altered considerably concerning its desirability. He argues:

> Next to the Bible Society, the Sunday School institution stands preeminently deserving the attention of co-operation of all good men; for without the people can read the Bible, of what use is the multiplication and diffusion of the Divine volume! I never had but one objection to the administration of the system—never one to the system itself. That objection was simply to the sectarian abuse whenever any bias was given presented as premiums, but which it seems to me

> that there was an unfair advantage taken in making an institution peculiarly catholic, sectarian, and partial.[17]

Although Barton Stone (1772-1844) objected to Sunday school as an institution,[18] he did not object to the teaching of children in classes. He penned:

> Let us not neglect to meet together every Lord's day for worship. Should you have no preacher, meet and read the scriptures, sing, pray and exhort one another. Let a part of the day be devoted to the instruction of our children in the scriptures. Choose one or more pious and intelligent men, who shall preside over the class of children: let them previously assign the portion of scripture to be read, and labor to make them understand it. This will be found profitable and pleasant.[19]

In 1834 John T. Johnson (1788-1856) narrated the events surrounding the establishment of a Sunday school in Georgetown, Kentucky:

> On the first Lord's day of February the Brethren and Sisters in and near Georgetown met at their place of worship and determined from that time forward to commence committing to memory the oracles of Heaven. The following organization then succeeded. The sisters were divided into two classes; and to each of these classes was assigned the duty of superintending a class of girls allotted to each. . . . The same course was adopted in reference to the Brethren and the youth committed to their charge.[20]

Early Opposition

Even though many churches adopted Sunday school, nevertheless there were many that did not.[21] "Some disciples, however, opposed it because it was not mentioned specifically in the Bible."[22] Steven Eckstein surveys the history of this controversy under the caption "Minor Issues";[23] He writes that

> In Texas, the first dispute over the Sunday school occurred in 1875. Minister G. W. Harvey of the Concord church, Austin County, labeled the Sunday school as a device to "attract little children, keep them from the prairie on Lord's day running mule eared rabbits, riding jacks and doing mischief generally. In reply to Harvey's question for "a catechism" with which to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Lipscomb thoughtfully suggested that a well conducted Sunday School for both old and young is a "true method" of teaching on Lord's day.[24] But McGary retorted that the admonition for parents to teach the Bible to their children laid no foundation for Sunday school. "Away with Sunday Schools, even if Bro. Lipscomb had memorized the whole New Testament at Sunday school." If the apostles did not have Sunday Schools, he continued, we do not need them and should not have them.[25] Later, however, McGary evidently had changed his mind as he contended that literature prepared "in the light of God's truth and in harmony with it, adapted to unfolding the tender mind of children, cannot be condemned."[26] [27]

There were many others who opposed the so-called innovations. One of the first and perhaps

the most vocal against Sunday school and individual communion cups was Dr. George Averill Trott (1855-1930).[28] Dr. Trott became one of the editors of the ***Firm Foundation*** along

with Nimrod Lafayette Clark (1870-?). Clark also condemned Sunday school as an innovation. In 1906, Clark and R. L. Whiteside exchanged articles on the subject.[29] As early as 1897 some were willing to draw the line of fellowship over instrumental music, societies, and rebaptism[30], but the dividing line over Sunday school did not occur until 1918. Ervin Water (b. 1918) asserts that N. L. Clark is the father of the non-class movement:

> It was not until 1918 that our people began to draw lines over the Sunday school question. N. L. Clark was the father of the non-class movement in Texas. Even though he debated the subject with men like G. H. P. Showalter and R. L. Whiteside, he never made it a test of fellowship. He even served with brother Showalter as co-editor of the Firm Foundation back in those days. But others began to draw lines and create parties, so that the division was well crystallized by the time I began to preach in 1935.[31]

In 1910, J. T. Showalter wrote an essay about Sunday school for the ***Gospel Advocate***. In this article he repudiated the scripturalness of the practice:

> Whenever any man proves the Sunday school to be of divine authority, he can prove missionary societies to be of divine authority. By all rules of logic, he that "would the one retain, must to the other cling." I emphatically deny that there is any divine authority for Sunday-schools either by precept or precedent, hint or allusion. . . . In all the writings of the New Testament there is not one word that even squints in that direction. Not a word is said about a Sunday-school superintendent, a Sunday-school teacher, Sunday-school scholars or anything of that kind.[32]

Another figure that played a very important role in the non-Sunday-school movement was Clarence Teurman (1884-1923),[33] who later became publisher (1916) of the ***Apostolic Way*** (1913-?). Following the death of Teurman, R. F. Duckworth succeeded him as publisher (1925). In the beginning, "Duckworth was wholeheartedly opposed to Sunday-schools as well as a plurality of cups.[34] The editorial staff consisted of the following men: G. A. Trott, H. C. Harper, N. L. Clark, and R. F. Duckworth. Also, Trott and Harper both opposed Sunday-schools as well as a plurality of cups.[35]

As a result of Duckworth's later views concerning these two issues, a new paper was initiated by H. C. Harper (1874-1936) called ***The Truth*** (1928-1931). Soon after the beginning of ***The Truth***, Harper invited J. D. Phillips (1904-1981) to join him in the editorial responsibilities. Dough Phillips was converted under the preaching of Homer L. King (1892-1983), who also became a part of the editorial staff (1930).[36] In 1929, Harper approached Phillips about taking over the publication of ***The Truth***. But the transition was not made until 1931. At this time Phillips and King assumed equal ownership of the paper. The name was changed to ***Old Paths Advocate***, which is still published. With the first issue of the paper another name was added to the editorial masthead, Homer A. Gay (1894-1958).[37]

THE DILEMMA OF THE ONE-CUP MOVEMENT

The following documented account of the one-cup and non-Sunday school heritage is not to impugn the godly motives of so many who advocated (advocates) these views in their endeavor to be true to what they understood (understand) the Word of God to teach. One cannot help but reflect upon the words of Paul in Romans when one contemplates upon the sincere efforts of so-many who have gone to be with Jesus.[38] In 1982, Don McCord commented on the passing of several defenders of the faith—men that sought to do what God wanted them to do. Some of these men I knew personally. It is appropriate that we remember the names of such valiant soldiers of the cross who preached Jesus (The men listed below were all members of the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement). McCord writes:

> I rejoice to see the names of men that many of the readers of the ***Old Paths Advocate*** would recognize in the writings of H. C. Harper, Dr. G. A. Trott, Homer King, Homer A. Gay, James R. Stewart; D. F. Nichols, whose grandsons, Paul, Richard, Nelson are known among us, as well as great grandsons, the Middicks; Oscar Brannon, uncle by marriage to C. A. Smith and this writer's wife; Bro. F. K. Reeves of Marion, La., whose kin are still strong for the faith; Bro. L. G. Park, whose children and grandchildren are still in the church, and counted for years among the writer's dear, true friends; Bro. John L. Reynolds, who, for so long labored in the gospel in California; Bro. Sam L. Schulz whose late widow and daughter for years have been faithful servants; Bro. W. H. Reynolds, whose descendents are still numbered among the most faithful in south Alabama; Bro. Thomas J. Shaw, of Pa., whose sons Tommy, Jimmy and Paul are known by many of us; S. M. Prince, among whose faithful children and grandchildren it is my privilege, as I try to writ this, to work with in a meeting at Napoleon, Ala., where his works abundantly follow on; Bro. Charles H. Lechner, whose children and grandchildren still honor his name in southern and central Calif., Bro. Burley F. Black; Bro. C. H. James, maternal grandfather of Ron Willis, our preaching brother. . . . In my musings, it would be this writer's conclusion, that the saddest issue was July 16, 1928, in which it chronicles the tragic death of one of the editors, Bro. Clarence Teurman, who met his death by fire while printing the paper. The message of condolence bear familiar names; among them, G. A. Trott; H. C. Harper and wife, Ruth; N. L. Clark, Sam L. Schultz; G. H. P. Showalter; W. Guy Ashley; and Elbert D. Miller, father to E. H. Miller, and grandfather to the preachers Bailey.[39]

With such a host of names, one still cannot help but reflect upon so many divisions within this movement of so many equally godly men. This movement is shattered into many parts, each of which claims to "speak where the Bible speaks" and to "be silent where the Bible is silent." Consider, for example, the utter helplessness of this so-called "loyal church" movement to maintain any semblance of unity—even with the one-cup and non-Sunday school philosophy:

Bread-Breakers Versus the Bread-Pinchers

1. One-cup, grape juice only, **bread-pinchers** (bread must remain one piece) and non-Sunday school[40]
2. One-cup, grape juice only, **bread-breakers**, non-Sunday school.

The only difference between one and two is the issue of whether to break the bread into two

or more pieces. In other words, can the bread be broken into two or more pieces or must the bread be left whole (one piece) by simply pinching a piece of bread? The "bread-breaking" body will not fellowship the "bread-pinching" party nor will the "bread-pinching" party fellowship the "bread-breaking" party. The "bread-breakers" and the "bread-pinchers" will not fellowship one another—even though both factions employ "one-cup" in the distribution of the fruit of the vine. But, this is not all of their problems. There is the "grape juice only" church and there is the "wine only" church:

Wine Only Versus Grape Juice Only

1. One-cup, **wine only**, bread-pinchers, non-Sunday school
2. One-cup, **grape juice** only, break pinchers, non-Sunday school

The "grape juice only" family will not fellowship the "wine only" family. On the other hand, the "wine only" party will not fellowship the "grape juice only" party. In all of this division over how to interpret the Scriptures, no one seems to be able to arrive at a peaceable solution concerning these issues, even though all "speak where the Bible speaks." Next, there is the "no exception" association of believers that will not brotherhood the "exception" compact:

Divorce Exception Versus No Divorce Exception

1. One-cup, grape juice only, bread-pinchers, non-Sunday school, **divorce exception** (Matthew 19:9.[41]
2. One-cup, grape juice only, bread-pinchers, non-Sunday school, **no divorce exception** (Matthew 19:9).

The only difference between the above two groups (5 and 6) is the acceptance or denial of Matthew's exception clause: "except it be for fornication." Many within the "no-exception" church will not fellowship those within the "exception" church. But the "exception" party is willing to accept the "no-exception" party. Again, another division is over fellowship. One group refuses togetherness with another group because one group fraternize brethren who do not recognize the arguments in favor of the "one-cup, grape juice only, bread-pinchers, and non-Sunday school.

Fellowshipping Versus Non-Fellowshipping

1. One-cup, grape juice only, break-pinchers, non-Sunday school, **no fellowshipping other Christians**, unless they are willing to ostracize those that differ with themselves. [42]
2. One-cup, grape juice only, bread-pinchers, non-Sunday school, **fellowshipping other Christians** inspite of departures in understanding from the so-called orthodox party line.[43]

The only major difference between these two factions (7 and 8) relates to fellowship. If anyone extends fellowship to individuals who participate in the Lord's supper with the use of individual cups, fermented grape juice (wine), breaking the bread in pieces (not leaving the loaf in one unbroken piece), and so on, then, that person is thrown out of the so-called "loyal" church. To express fellowship with individuals who do not possess absolute knowledge is tantamount to having fellowship with those who do not "abide in the doctrine

of Christ" (**2 John 9**). What are the answers to the above positions that so many equally godly men propose as the Word of God? May the words of Paul to the Corinthians admonish all believers to make allowances for others of a different mind-set. The answer to imperfection in knowledge is found in Paul's letter to Corinth:

> We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God (**I Corinthians 8:1b-3**).

ONE-CUP CHURCHES AND PATTERN THEOLOGY

Many Christians are not acquainted with the "one-cup" movement within the Churches of Christ. Nevertheless, there is still a large segment within the Churches of Christ that does not accept the use of individual communion cups in the observance of the Lord's Supper and that also object to the class method of teaching Christians when they assemble for the so-called "worship service." These convictions are based on the philosophy of "pattern theology."[44] Ronny Wade, assistant publisher of ***Old Paths Advocate***[45] sets forth the central premise concerning the use of "one-cup" and "non-Sunday school" persuasion. He sets forth his authority for such a position by citing **Hebrews 8:5** to justify his "pattern theology" concerning a worship service. He writes: "If Moses was commanded by God to 'to make all things according to the pattern' Hebrews 8:5 are not we bound by the same obligation (sic)? Either there is a pattern for the observance of the communion or there is none."[46] Wade's recall of the ***Old Paths Advocate*** beginning is quite revealing concerning its purpose in 1928:

> This journal was started by Brother H. C. Harper in 1928. At that time the controversy over individual cups in the communion was still rather young. The introduction of the Sunday school was still a problem of great concern. Every month, the columns of this paper were filled with articles opposing these and all other innovations. Debates were common, and those guilty of fostering changes in the **divine pattern** were called into question time and again by various writers. Over time the sharpness of the controversy dulled. . . . Today, some of those same issues are surfacing again, with renewed vigor. . . . What does this all mean to readers of ***Old Paths Advocate***? Simply stated, It means that we are going to have to fight all over again the battles of the past.[47] (Emphasis mine—RDB).

The primary objective of the ***OPA*** (1997), so it seems, is still to promote the so-called concept of "pattern theology" as interpreted by the one-cup and non-Sunday school brethren. One either accepts the interpretation of their concept of what the "pattern" is, or faces dire consequences. In fact, Don L. King, publisher of ***OPA***, states emphatically that one is going to hell if one participates in the use of a plurality of cups in the observance of the Lord's Supper. He puts it this way:

> We are concerned with things we hear about the subject of fellowship. . . . Why do we worship with one-cup? Answer: because **we read it plainly** in Matthew 26:27: Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25-28. Is it wrong, sinful to use more than one? Answer: yes, because more than one-cup violates the **example** given in these verses, it violates the **command** for us to do as Jesus did. . . . Listen, brethren: we believe it is wrong to use more than one-cup. **We**

> **believe people are going to be lost for using more than one-cup.** Surely, we believe that! If people are not going to be lost for using more than one, then let's give up the fight and heal the division caused by those who have insisted on using more than one. . . . Individual cups are a sinful violation of the **Bible pattern**. . . . What about Bible Classes? Is it right to divide the public assembly into classes for the purpose of teaching and allow women to teach? . . . The **pattern** is always an undivided assembly with one man at a time doing the teaching.[48] (Emphasis mine—RDB).

Even though King says, "we read it plainly," surely, not all-plain teaching is equally plain to all, otherwise there would not be such a wide division among equally godly Christians.[49] Before leaving this point, however, it is necessary to bring to the attention of all readers, which includes this author, that every Christian generally has a flaw(s) in his or her hermeneutics. The flaw is that all Christians bring their presuppositions to the text when they interpret. One's goal is to study the Word of God without spectacles, but that aspiration is almost next to impossible, because none are born in a vacuum. Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, contemporary scholars, point out: "This the great flaw in our common hermeneutics. Without necessarily intending to, we bring our theological heritage, our ecclesiastical traditions, our cultural norms, or our existential concerns to the Epistles as we read them. And this results in all kinds of selectivity or 'getting around' certain texts."[50]

A SUMMARIZED HISTORY OF THE COMMON CUP IN THE STONE/CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

As stated above, the use of "one common cup" in the distribution of the fruit of the vine in the observance of the Lord's Supper is no longer a well-known fact among many Christians. But there are still many congregations today that will not use individual communion cups in the celebration of the communion. Ronny Wade states their position very succinctly:

> A reading of New Testament passages regarding the Lord's Supper leads one to the unavoidable conclusion that Jesus used only one cup in the original institution, and that the early churches followed that example in their observance.[51]

In addition to the surface Scripture citations, "one-cup" brethren rely upon secular history to substantiate their position concerning the use of "one-cup" versus "multiple cups." One is scriptural, the other is not, according to their interpretation. For example, it is a fact of history that the use of individual communion cups was introduced in a Congregational Church in Putnam Co., Ohio in 1893 by Rev. Dr. J. G. Thomas, who was both a physician and minister.[52] The following year he was granted a patent on his invention.[53] The Thomas communion Service Co. wrote to E. H. Miller,[54] my uncle, the following letter:

E. H. Miller

% Dr. A. R. McMullon
809 Butternut
Abilene, Texas

Dear Sir:

Your Letter of April 17, 1950 has been received and we are pleased to inform you that the writer's grandfather, John G. Thomas, who was both a physician and a minister invented the first individual communion outfits. The first patents were issued to him in 1894. The Market Street Presbyterian Church, of Lima, Ohio is believe (sic) to be the first church to use individual communion cups in a communion service. This also occurred in 1894. What is believed to be the original individual communion service used by this church is on display in the Allen County Historical Museum in Lima, Ohio. Under separate cover we are making shipment today of an old style pewter common cup. You may have it with our compliments.

Very truly Yours,

THOMAS COMMUNION SERVICE CO[55]

Early Opposition to Small Individual Cups

Initially, there was opposition to the use of individual communion cups by such men as J. W. McGarvey (1829-1911) and David Lipscomb (1831-1917). McGarvey wrote in ***The Christian Standard***:

> I have been a member of the church for forty-three years, and it has been my good fortune to be acquainted with several of our most learned and influential minister—Alexander Campbell among them—and it seems strange to me that they did not find a necessity for the individual cups.[56]

Lipscomb also objected to the employment of individual communion cups. He set forth his objections in no uncertain terms:

> Communion is a joint participation of two or more in one work or service. The communion of the Lord's Supper is the joint participation of the members in the loaf and in the cup. . . . This shows a communion of the many on one cup and one bread. . . . To divide the cup and bread into many parts and for each to partake of his own bread and cup destroys the idea of communion and separates them into many instead of a communion into one. It is very certain the bread and cup were not divided into many parts in the days of Jesus and the apostles, and the feeling grows up from a disposition to follow other rules than the example of the Master. When this feeling leads, it leads us away from God and his laws in reference to them. It is a great strain upon our feelings of reverence for and

> loyalty to God for us to follow another leader or ruler even in matters indifferent. . . . A church must be in heart disloyal to leave an old and approved way and walk in a new and doubtful way. . . . The most earthly, sensual, and ungodly spirit is that which changes merely to be like and follow the world, to be in style. . . . What is the motive that leads to the adoption of the individual cups in the Lord's Supper? It is usually said to be for the health of the partakers. Is this true? In the church house there are hundreds of people breathing and interbreathing the atmosphere of the room, infected and impregnated with all the diseases of the body, the stomach, and the catarrhal phlegm of the nose, the mouth, the throat, the stomach, the bowels, with all the fetid effluvia from all parts of these changing and decaying bodies of all the congregation. This impregnated and poisoned atmosphere is repoisoned and breathed and interbreathed hundreds of times in the house where all are congregated; and some, while doing this, complain and find fault and change the appointments of God to avoid taking a crumb of bread or a sup of wine because others have partaken of the same. Certainly these persons are doing worse than straining out gnats and swallowing camels, and element of faith enters into all service. The Bible tells us that in doing the will of God with fidelity the blessing of God will come upon us (Psa. 84:11).
>
> No one ever heard of an affliction coming on a child of God partaking of the memorials of his love to a lost and ruined world. The desire to change the order established by Jesus and the apostle indicates a willingness to turn form the appointments of God in order to go with the ways of the world. Such a spirit does not fit us to serve God here or to live with him in the world to come. It is safe to both bodily and spiritual health to continue in the ways in which Jesus and the apostle walked.[57]

Both McGarvey and Lipscomb later changed their views concerning this issue, but these two quotes illustrate the emotional fervor that existed during the early stage of this change.[58]

First Church of Christ to Use Small Individual Cups

Which Church of Christ was the first to advocate the use of the small individual cups? In answer to this question, Ronny Wade wrote: "Brother C. E. Holt of Florence, Alabama may have been the first non-instrumental preacher to come out in favor of individual cups."[59] C. E. Holt explains his position:

> I do not claim that this is the only scriptural way of taking the Lord's Supper, but it is as scriptural as any other way, and besides it has the advantage of being clean. We are aware that some brethren ridicule the idea that microbes can be transmitted from one to another by the common cup, yet the weight of authority is against them.[60]

H. C. Harper (1874-1936) reviewed the arguments made by Holt in the March 5, 1912 issue of the Firm Foundation. This paper also published a written discussion between L. J. Killion and Harper over the innovation of individual cups. The late G. C. Brewer (1884-1956) introduced the individual communion cups into the central Church of Christ at Chattanooga, Tennessee. About this same time, G. Dallas Smith (1870-1920) began to speak out for their

use. This news caused Brewer to contact both Holt and Smith, thus the three men began to openly advocate the use of individual cups. Also, since Brewer knew the influence that Lipscomb exerted in the South, he took a trip to Nashville to convince him of the scripturalness of multiple containers. But much to his chagrin, he could not convince Lipscomb to change his position. But suddenly a ray of hope came through; Lipscomb admitted to him that he was about to change his mind.[61]

Two months after the founding of the ***Apostolic Way*** (1913-1934), Dr. G. A. Trott denounced the "cups" fashion. Men such as Trott, Harper, McGarvey, and Lipscomb were vocal against individual cups. According to Wade, "Harper more than any other individual deserves the credit for leading the fight against a plurality of cups in the communion."[62] Trott charged: "When they know they have the truth on their side they are as brash and impetuous about debating as a mule's hind leg, but just try to get one of them to debate the Sunday school or the individual cup and they have about as much pep as a chicken dying with the limber neck."[63]

N. L. Clark openly defended the use of more than one. Nevertheless, he wrote a paper opposing cups on the basis that they pampered human pride, which he believed was sinful. According to Wade, he did not make the issue a test of fellowship. But on the other hand Clark said, "I cannot accept the contention that one-cup only is scriptural."[64] In November, Harper challenged Clark to a debate. Duckworth, publisher of ***Apostolic Way***, wrote an apology for allowing these two editors to get into a brawl over this issue:

> I owe the readers of the ***Apostolic Way*** an apology as I have allowed two of the editors to appear in its columns in open conflict. Hereafter I shall ask the editors when writing on any question to write without any reference to their disagreement with any one of the other editors.
>
> I think Brother Clark's ideas, in regard to two of the editors discussing a question, correct. Yet I am known, by the reader of ***The Way***, to be strongly opposed to the **individual cup**, practice, my sympathies have been and are with **the one-cup idea**. I say this without any intention of trying to be more than fair, yet I, at all times, endeavor to keep an open mind regarding every debatable question and have such a mind regarding the use of one or more cups, though I think I am thoroughly established against the individual cups.[65]

By the year 1926, Duckworth leaned toward the use of individual cups. As a result of this progressive disposition, H. C. Harper (1874-1936), one of the editors withdrew and began another paper called ***The Truth*** (1928-1931). Dr. Trott (1855-1930), original founder, also resigned in 1926, but he still continued as front-page writer until his death.[66] In the first issue of ***The Truth***, Harper wrote:

> As Brother Trott will be connected with us prominently as a writer according to his promise it is befitting that he be heard from at this time. He says:
>
> > I stand where I have always stood, for strict adherence to the precepts and examples of the New Testament and shall advocate that principle until I die. I love you for your work's sake and your love for the gospel.[67]

As a result of Trott's fight against individual cups, this antagonism against cups brought him into conflict with J. N. Cowan (1879-1941), Johnson, Clark and others. Trott offered to debate Cowan, but the debate never took place. Trott also tangles with Warlick over the Sunday-school question. Later, Harper took Trott to task over the following proposition" "A Church of Christ in its use of cups in the Communion is 'contending earnestly for faith once delivered to the saints in both doctrine and practice."[68] With Harper it was not an either/or proposition. In order for one to "contend for the faith," one MUST use one-cup. He offered to debate Trott, but the debate never occurred.

E. H. Miller and the One-cup Movement in LaGrange, GA

This story begins with Clarence Teurman who became editor of the ***Apostolic Way*** in 1916. In the early 20s, he went to LaGrange, Ga., at the invitation of the Brownings,[69] and established a congregation. My grandfather, Elbert D. Miller (1885-1969) was invited to hear brother Teurman.[70] As a result of the Brownings, Teurman established the "Non-Sunday School" congregation in the latter part of the 1920s.[71] This congregation became known as the Park Ave. Church of Christ. During one of Teurman's visits, he baptized my Uncle, E. H. Miller (1909-1989),[72] and grandmother, Fannie Williams Miller (1890-1981). Teurman was killed the following year (1923) while publishing the ***Apostolic Way*****.** Later this congregation (Park Ave. Church of Christ) divided over the Sunday school question but did not divide over the use of a plurality of cups.[73] As a result of this innovation, the Murphy Ave. Church of Christ was formed—both congregations still exist.[74]

After Miller's final conversion to the "one-cup" theory, he took up the fight for the use of one-cup and non-Sunday school philosophy.[75] He debated these issues from one end of the country to the other end.[76] Many congregations were established as an outcome of his efforts. Also, as a result of my uncle's influence and his father's (Elbert Dallis Miller) influence, I was baptized on 9 November 1949. In 1950, I moved to LaGrange, GA., and delivered my first sermon (January 1951) at the Murphy Ave. Church of Christ under the tutelage of my uncle.[77] The following year (1952), I moved back to Montgomery, AL and started a congregation of the one-cup and non-Sunday school persuasion with the assistance of my mother—Thelma Haygood, b. 1913, and my stepfather, Teddy Haygood (1904-1978). [78]

CONCLUSION

> We cannot escape tradition and its effects upon us. We can deny it, but we cannot escape it. We are all caught up in a web of traditions. . . . We inherit not only the Bible itself but also a traditional way of reading it. From our parents, from the preachers we admire, from Sunday School teachers, from the books and magazines we read, we receive a certain way of reading the Bible. We are part of a tradition of interpretation.**[79]**

The above citation draws attention to the fact that no one can totally escape his or her religious heritage. This essay is not designed to prove or disprove the one-cup and Sunday school positions, but only to give a brief history of this movement to indicate the dilemma that many Christians find themselves in. I have sought to write this paper as objectively as possible. But since I am so closely associated with this "one-cup and non-Sunday school movement," it is almost impossible to remove myself completely; nevertheless, I have sought

to be objective in presenting a brief overview of the history behind this particular movement.

As a result of my studies in the early 1970s, I became convinced that the one-cup movement had/has misinterpreted the Eucharistic sayings as well as the Sunday school issue. Thus, because of this change in my attitude toward the use of a plurality of cups and Bible study on Sunday morning, I accepted other believers among the cups and Sunday school brethren. When the congregation (Vonora Ave. Church of Christ[80]) accepted brother M. S. Whitehead, formerly a member of the Chisholm Church of Christ (cups and classes), into the fellowship of the saints, then, I was disenfranchised by the congregations of the "one-cup" belief. With many of these Christians, one was not allowed to remain in fellowship with the "one-cup" believers unless one knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that one would be lost if one participated in the use of individual cups in the distribution of the fruit of the vine.

Why study the past? What difference does it make in our relationship with one another? Why am I writing about this one-cup and non-Sunday school history? In response to these questions, I call attention to David Steinmetz who captures the necessity of studying the past very pungently:

> As long as we accept uncritically what we have received from the past, we put ourselves unreservedly in its power. Tradition can obscure as well as clarify the gospel. The study of church history gives us freedom vis-à-vis the past, freedom to appropriate the riches of the church's past wisdom, when we can, and to overcome its faithlessness and sin, when we must. . . . The church could, I suppose, lose its memory as well. It is certainly tempted to do that often enough. But a church which has lost its memory of the past can only wander about aimlessly in the present and despair of its future. The church needs the past, if only for the sake of the present and the future.[81]

ENDNOTES

[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, ***The Vindication of Tradition*** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 60.

[2] The one-cup crusade is divided several times within its own ranks. Not one of the various factions within this bizarre movement can agree on this now famous cliché. This affirmation of loyalty to God by the one-cup faction is not unique for this fuzzy division, but also for the approximately twenty-five or more splits within the churches of Christ in general. Many Churches of Christ are aware of the many inconsistencies within its own movement and is now seeking to rephrase this cliché.

[3] Leroy Garrett, ***The Stone-Campbell Movement***, revised edition (Joplin, Missouri: College press, 1994), 437, writes:

One-cup Churches of Christ

Since it is fractured five ways, this cluster of churches is the most difficult to identify. The main group may have as many as 30,000 members in upwards of 530 churches, most of

which have 30--60 members. Homer King, Stockton, Ca., now deceased was the old editor bishop, and his ***Old Paths Advocate***, which began in 1928, has long been what the old-timers call "the Standard." It is now edited in Lebanon, Mo., by his son, Don King. There is also ***The Christian Expositor***, a quarterly, edited by Smith Bibbins, in Buffalo, Mo.

[4] I had the opportunity to hear Homer King, Homer Gay, and Doug Phillips, the original editors of the ***Old Paths Advocate***. Also, one of the first generation advocates of this "one-cup" movement, Clarence Teurman, baptized my uncle, E.H. Miller, who later became one of the foremost debaters and defenders of the "one-cup" and non-Sunday school movement.

[5] This now famous motto is not unique just to the "one-cup party"; every division within the Stone/Campbell movement advocates this motto.

[6] C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, ***Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*** (ACU Press: Texas, 1988), 115.

[7] Ibid., 138.

[8] Ibid., 143.

[9] Ibid., 105.

[10] Alexander Campbell, "The Christian Religion," ***The Christian Baptist*** 1 (4 July 1823): 14.

[11] Jerry Johnson, "The Local Church," ***The Light*** 27, no. 1 (January 1996): 9 where Johnson says:

> The silence of the Scriptures is vital to the application of this study. Are we permitted to do that which is not specifically forbidden, such as allowing other communion services or other treasuries (however temporary) outside the local church? "Where the bible is silent, we are silent." Rather than being *permissive*, Biblical silence is restrictive. This is essentially the same logic we use of the cups issue. The Book never states, "Thou shalt not use individual cups," yet we are restricted to doing only what the Book clearly illustrates.

[12] Ronny F. Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again Someday*** (Springfield, Missouri: Yesterday's Treasures, 1986), 24. See also Stephen Daniel Eckstein Jr., ***History of the Churches of Christ in Texas 1824-1950*** (Texas: Firm Foundation, 1963), 262.

[13] Ibid., 25.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Alexander Campbell, "The Christian Religion," ***The Christian Baptist*** 1 (January 1827): 14.

[16] Alexander Campbell, "Prefatory Remarks," ***The Christian Baptist*** 2 (2 August 1824): 5.

[17] Alexander Campbell, "Reply to Elder A. W. Corey," ***The Millennial Harbinger*** IV (April 1847): 200.

[18] See Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again Someday***, 28.

[19] Barton Stone, "An Address," ***The Christian Messenger*** 2 (January 1828): 72.

[20] J. T. Johnson, "Christian School," ***Christian Messenger*** VIII (February 1834): 62. .

[21] See Larry Hart, "A Brief History of a Minor Restorationist Group (The Non-Sunday-School Churches of Christ)" ***Restoration Quarterly*** 22, no 4 (Fourth Quarter 1979): 211-232 for an excellent overview of this movement.

[22] Eckstein, ***History of the Churches of Christ In Texas***, 262.

[23] Ibid.

[24] G. W. Harvey, "Church News," ***Gospel Advocate***, XVII (June 3, 1875), pp 535-537.

[25] ***Firm Foundation***, January 15, 1888.

[26] Ibid., May 23, 1899.

[27] Eckstein, ***History of the Churches of Christ in Texas,*** 264.

[28] Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 30.

[29] Ibid., 34-35.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ervin Water, "The Odyssey of Division," ***Restoration Review XII*** (March 1971): 39.

[32] J. T. Showalter, "The Sunday School," in ***Gospel Advocate*** (21 April 1910): 488.

[33] In 1922, Clarence Teurman baptized E. H. Miller (my uncle) and Miller's mother, Fannie Miller (my grandmother). Brother Teurman died as a result of a fire while working on the July 1 issue of his paper. At the time of his death, brother J. A. Dennis was with him. J. A. Dennis baptized my mother (Thelma Haygood) and my aunt (Katherine Hammer, b. 1911). My grandfather (Elbert Dallis Miller) wrote in the ***Apostolic Way****:* "Brother Teurman's death was the greatest shock that myself and family ever received." During the ministry of Teurman, Dennis purchased a car for Teurman to help him in his evangelistic tours, although Dennis could not afford one for himself and his family. My mother related some of this information to me and the other data is found in Wade's book: ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 41.

[34] Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 70.

[35] Ibid., 70.

[36] Ibid., 89-90.

[37] Ibid., 104-106. As a young preacher boy, I met and heard the original editors--J. D. Phillips, Homer L. King, and Homer A. Gay--of the ***Old Paths Advocate*** preach the gospel of Jesus.

[38] In Romans, chapters 14 and 15, Paul sets forth principles for Christian unity when believers do not see "eye to eye" on every doctrinal issue. He wrote forcefully and to the point: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

[39] Don McCord, "Perusings and Musings," ***Old Paths Advocate*** LIV (September, 1982): 1, 6.

[40] See Bennie T. Cryer, "Not Discerning the Lord's Body," ***Olds Paths Advocate*** LVII (August 1985), 1. He writes:

> **ONE UNDIVIDED LOAF STANDS FOR THAT ONE BODY:** Because of this fact Christ chose to use only one loaf and keep it in one unit. Each member that shared this loaf was declaring his oneness with all the other members of that community of Christians. 1 Cor. 10:16-17.

See also Edward Williamson, "A Reply to Bro. C. W. Mickey, ***Olds Paths Advocate*** LVII (August 1985): 7. Williamson replies to Mickey's arguments concerning the breaking of bread:

> In the May through August, 1985 issues of the "***Reasoner***," I read an article written by Bro. C. W. Mickey entitled "Blind, He Leads The Blind." This article was an attempt by Bro Mickey to justify the breaking of the communion loaf before it is passed to the congregation. Earlier this year I engaged Bro. Mickey in written discussion, but I feel that the article he wrote needs to be reviewed since there is much untruth contained in it. We are in agreement with him on what he states in his first paragraph that Jesus took only one loaf when He instituted the Lord's Supper. However, from this point on we have many differences. . . . That one body (the loaf) is whole when we partake of it to symbolize the one body of Christ, not shattered into pieces as Bro. Mickey teaches.

[41] See Ronny F. Wade, "The Light--A Response," ***Old Paths Advocate*** LVI (July 1984): 4. He writes about "two neatly wrapped bundles":

> Bro. Jerry Johnson's attempt to divide us into two neatly wrapped bundles "the pros" and "the cons" may make good copy, but it is neither true nor practical. (***The Light***, March 1984).
>
> The fact that the ***Old Paths Advocate*** has published a number of articles recently on these subjects is very disturbing to "***The Light.***" That should come as no

surprise to anyone. For several years, through its pages, the "no exception" view has been heralded long and loud. Since this is basically why the paper came into existence in the first place. I for one, believe they have every right to publish their views. By the same token the ***Old Paths Advocate*** has the right to publish articles in defense of the application of Mt. 19:9 to Christians today.

[42] See Alan Bonifay, "Has Brother J. Ervin Waters Returned?", ***Christian's Expositor Extra***, VI (April 1996): 7, for an example of this philosophy about fellowship among those who do not concur with the status quo of the party that everything doctrinally correct, that is, according to their interpretation, which is the same as God's Word (?). Bonifay expresses the concerns of the "one-cup" brethren when he writes:

> **The Problem:** The issue is not whether or not Bro. Waters' confessions should be received. They certainly should be accepted at face value. They are to be applauded and received with thanksgiving. The issue is not whether or not Bro. Waters intends to personally call on digressives. Reportedly he has said he will no longer do this. For this too, we give God thanks.
>
> The issue is over Bro. Waters' view of fellowship and his practice of extending it to congregations and brethren who are not in the fellowship of our Lord. When Bro. Waters recants his position expressed above and when he demonstrates by his behavior that his position has come in line with the truth and in line with Jesus then he will be received without question. Until then he will not. For now we will follow Bro. Waters only advice and judge him by his fruits (Mt. 7:15-20).

See also Clovis T. Cook, "Setting the Record Straight," ***Old Paths Advocate*** LXX (May 1996): 4, where he writes:

> Since we have approximately five hundred congregations in the United States, it is our firm belief that the most of the congregations would not agree that they could use cups and class or wine brethren in their public worship services. It creates a stumbling block on our way to full unity and fellowship in the body of Christ. . . . I think that it goes without saying, that the confession and statement that has been made by Bro. Waters should be accepted. . . . His practice of fellowshipping and "bidding God-speed" to a few congregations who have stepped across the line and have definitely become a "congregation on the other side" who exist because of division, or who retain in their fellowship a person or persons who are living in defiance of God's moral law, or who maintains a very loose and lax control over them that labor among us. We have asked our dear brother to cease this practice, clearing the way for full fellowship, peace, unity and harmony, as we hand in yesteryear.

[43] Ibid., again, Bonifay expresses his concern over Water's position of fellowship:

> Today, Bro. Waters continues to worship with the congregation at 15th and "I" in Temple, Texas, which has a long standing practice of calling on various sorts of digressives, including , but not limited to John Staley, Karl (sic) Ketcherside,

and Olan Hicks. When questioned recently about their practice and urged to change it, one of the brethren reportedly stated they (the Temple congregation) had no intention of changing either their view or their practice.

[44] The expression "pattern theology" is a belief that God has prescribe five (5) acts or rituals to be performed in a prescribed manner on Sunday morning when Christians gather to encourage one another in the faith. These five acts must be observed in a certain order for worship to be "in spirit and truth," so it is advocated by many. The debate is not over whether the word "pattern" is a valid word, which it is, for the life of the believer, but whether or not God has ordained certain rituals to be engaged in on Sunday morning in a particular manner for worship to be "real," that is to say, according to the pattern, or New Testament blue-print.

[45] The ***Old Paths Advocate*** (***OPA***) began publication in 1932, but prior to this date, the paper was published under the name ***The Truth*** (1928-1931), edited by H. C. Harper, who formerly was one of three editors for the ***Apostolic Way*** (1913-?). The ***OPA*** is still the chief magazine for the "one-cup," "grape juice only," "bread-pinching" (that is, the bread must remain whole--must not be broken into more than one piece), "non-Sunday school," and "non-fellowshipping" (that is to say, anyone who disagrees with the doctrinal party beliefs). See Ronny F. Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday*** (Yesterday's Treasures: Missouri, 1986, 2, 74, as an example of the exclusive nature of this fellowship.

[46] Ibid., 1.

[47] Ronny F. Wade, "Looking Back to the Future," ***Old Paths Advocate*** LXVII (January 1995): 1.

[48] Don L. King, "Proper Perspective," editorial, ***Old Paths Advocate*** LXVII (September 1995): 2.

[49] This group, as stated above, is divided over many issues: (1) whether to use "grape juice," or "wine" in the observance of the Lord's Supper, (2) the manner of breaking the bread (one pinches the bread while the other breaks the bread into pieces), (3) the acceptance of the "exception clause" in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, while others deny that this clause is valid in the Christian dispensation, (4) the order of worship as recorded in Acts 2:42, and (5) the question of fellowship (Some Christians in this fellowship will not draw a line of demarcation against other believers that disagree with the above doctrinal matters).

[50] Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, ***How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth***, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 62.

[51] Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 53.

[52] History substantiates the pattern of "individual cups" in 1893. But does this mean that people prior to this date did not employ more than one-cup in the distribution of the fruit of the vine? No. It was not uncommon for churches to use two or more cups in Communion,. In fact, during the observance of the Passover, in the time of Christ, each person had his own cup. Thus, one may properly speak of individual cups utilized in the Passover celebration. But, it is true that the "small" individual cups, as adopted by churches today, did not exist

until 1893. There is a little sophistry employed on the part of the "one-cup" brethren about individual cups, though not deliberately. Only part of the story is told, not the whole story.

[53] Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 60.

[54] Letter dated: April 22, 1950.

[55] A photographic copy of this letter is in the Dallas Burdette's collection of books in Southern Christian University, 1200 Taylor Rd., Montgomery, AL 36117, phone 334-277-2277. This copy was given to Dallas Burdette by his uncle, E. H. Miller.

[56] J. W. McGarvey, "Biblical Criticism," ***Christian Standard*** (26 February 1910); (9) 353.

[57] David Lipscomb, "Individual Communion," ***Gospel Advocate*** (May 22, 1913): 488. Also, cited in Miller, ***Individual Communion Cups and the Cup of the Lord*** (nd), 5, 6.

[58] Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 65.

[59] Ibid.

[60] C. D. Holt, ***Gospel Advocate*** (11 July 1911); quoted in Wade, ***Thee Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 65. I checked the microfilm files for this citation listed by Wade, But I could not locate the citation as listed (RDB).

[61] Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday***, 66. I am indebted to Wade for this information. I do not have access to the above journals that he cites from.

[62] Ibid., 68. See also Lynwood Smith, "Brother H. C. Harper," ***Old Paths Advocate*** LIV (January 1982): 8, for an interesting note of history about Harper. Smith writes:

> Harry Charles Harper was born October 24, 1874, at Schannahon, Illinois. He was the son of staunch Christian parents. David Harper and Eliza (Newcomer) Harper . . . His father was baptized by Alexander Campbell, so we know that he had a close link with the great Restoration Movement, a fact that seemed evident in his life always. At age nineteen, December 19, 1892, he was baptized into Christ and began preaching at the evening services.

[63] G. A. Trott, "Cup or Cups?," ***Apostolic Way*** , vol., 2, no. 14 (1 July 1925): 1; I am indebted to Ronny Wade for this reference, but his citation is not same as cited directly from the journal. His citation is found in his book, ***The Sun Will Rise Again, Someday***, 70: "the digressives had the truth they were as `brash and impetuous about debating as a mule's leg,' but when you tried to get them to defend the Sunday-school and individual cups they had about as much pep as a chicken dying with the limber neck."

[64] N. L. Clark, ***Apostolic Way*** (15 December 1925); quoted in Wade, ***The Sun Will Shine again, Someday***, 71.

[65] F. F. Duckworth, ***Apostolic Way*** (1 April 1928); quoted in Wade, 71-72.

[66] Ibid., 77.

[67] H. C. Harper, ***T he Truth*** (June 1928); quoted in Wade, 77.

[68] Ibid., 83.

[69] Alton B. Bailey, "A Tribute to Brother E. H. Miller," ***Old Paths Advocate*** LXII (February 1990): 1. My mother, sister of E. H. Miller, also related to me the beginning of the "one-cup" movement in LaGrange, GA.

[70] My grandfather at this time was meeting with the Baptist, even though he was a member of the Church of Christ. At this particular time there was no Church of Christ in LaGrange.

[71] E. H. Miller, "Fifty Years," ***Old Paths Advocate*** LIV (January 1982): 20.

[72] Bailey, "A Tribute to Brother E. H. Miller, " Ibid:

He (E. H. Miller) obeyed the gospel in 1922 at the hands of Bro. Clarence Teurman. He preached his first sermon June 21, 1931 under an old Oak Tree in the front yard of Bro. Browning here in LaGrange. The title of his first sermon was "The Way to Heaven" and his last in March 1986 with the title "How Far Is It To Hell,"

[73] This division occurred in 1935. See Steve Bowen, "ELBERT HARVEY MILLER," ***The Informer*** (November 1989): 5. Bowen is the grandson of the late E. H. Miller.

[74] Another name that is worth mentioning is J. A. Dennis. He worked with Teurman; Dennis rejected Sunday School, but he accepted the use of individual communion cups. As a young boy, I remember hearing Dennis preach in a tent revival in Montgomery, AL. Today there is still a cups but non-Sunday-school group in Montgomery. My mother, Thelma Haygood, related to me that Dennis purchased a car for Teurman so that he could travel and preach the gospel, but he could not afford a car for himself.

[75] See Steve Bowen (grandson of E. H. Miller), "Elbert Harvey Miller," part 1, in ***The Informer*** (November, 1989): 1-7.

[76] See Alton B. Bailey, "A Tribute to Brother E. H. Miller," ***Old Paths Advocate***: 2. He writes:

> **As a debater**, he debated more subjects than any one preacher that I personally know. He debated lawyers, doctors, college professors, highly educated preachers, and uneducated preachers alike. I have no idea how many different subjects he debated publicly. Some of the subjects that I can recall were the Sunday School, Individual cups, The God Head, The Oneness, The Miraculous works of God, The Name, The new Birth, The hair and covering of 1 Cor. Chapter 11, The Marriage and divorce question, Baptism in the name of Jesus Only, Breaking of the Bread, The fermented Wine, etc.

[77] My first sermon was titled "What Should I Preach." This message presented the views of the party line--one-cup and non-Sunday school.

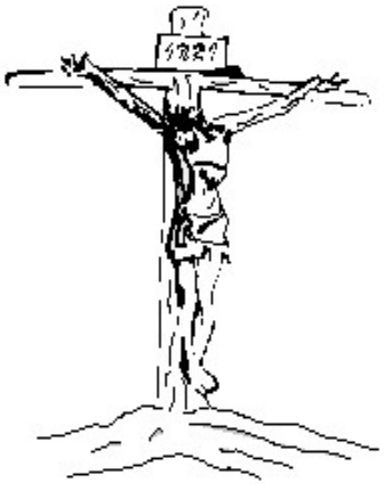
[78] This congregation was started in my mother's home. The original members of this congregation were Dallas Burdette, "Teddy" Haygood (my stepfather) and mother, Thelma Haygood. Eventually, this congregation grew to approximately 80 to 90 in attendance. I do not remember how many times my stepfather spoke before the congregation, but I recently found an old record where he delivered a sermon on December 30, 1956 at 6 p.m. Today there is just a handful left. As of this date (January 4, 1999), my mother still meets with this group of believers.

[79] C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, ***Discovering Our Roots*** (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 1988), 4.

[80] The designation of this congregation was originally called the Madison Ave. Church of Christ. Later this congregation rented a building on Union St. and became known as the Union St. Church of Christ. Then, the congregation moved to a ware house, owned by my stepfather and mother, on Rotary St. and became known as the Rotary St. Church of Christ. Finally, the congregation purchased property on the corner of Upper Wetumpka Road and Vonora Avenue and became known as the Vonora Ave. Church of Christ. Today, this congregation is under the leadership of Louis Arnette, a very devout Christian brother.

[81] David C. Steinmetz, "The Necessity of the Past," ***Theology Today*** 33, no. 2 (July 1976): 173, 176.

Blood in the Scheme of Redemption



By Dallas Burdette October 5, 1997

Thrust statement: Redemption is through the blood of Christ.

Scripture reading:

> For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28).
>
> For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul' (Leviticus 17:11).

COVENANT BLOOD

"this is my Blood of the New Covenant." This clause is pregnant and rich with historical background and meaning. An understanding of Old Testament sacrifices is indispensable to a proper grasp of this phrase. It is through the blood of the covenant that Jesus is able to accomplish for man that which he cannot accomplish for himself; namely, eternal redemption. Deliverance from condemnation is brought about through the blood of the Son of God. Paul sets forth the power of the blood in his epistle to the Ephesians:

> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the

> dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth (Ephesians 1:7-10).

Redemption includes everything God does for the sinner. In salvation two things stand out prominently in the mind of every believer; namely, the forgiveness of sins and redemption of the body from the grave. Each believer is an illustration of the power of the blood of Christ. It is through the virtue of the blood that God raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. It is through the blood of Christ that Christians are raised from the dead. The Hebrew writer forcefully anchored this truth in the hearts of the believers: "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

There is power in the blood! The blood makes us complete. The blood enables us to every good work. For all who believe in Jesus as God's Messiah, the blood opens the way to heaven, the blood opens the grave. In addition to these helps and benefits, the blood of Jesus destroys the power of death, the power of Satan, and the power of Hell.

The author of Hebrews artfully captures the essence of Christ's blood when he writes: "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). His blood is the answer to man's redemption. The Holy Spirit, through this same writer, also gives a prominent place to the blood:

> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn [who] [are] registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than [that] [of] Abel (Hebrews 12: 22-24).

It is the blood of Jesus that keeps heaven open for sinners and sends the spiritual blessings from heaven upon sinful man. The throne of grace owes its existence to the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Christians must never forget that redemption is through the blood of God's Anointed One. Peter expresses it this way: "...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, [like] silver or gold, from your aimless conduct [received] by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

As long as heaven lasts, the praises of the blood will sound forth from heaven itself. John writes: "And they sang a new song, saying: `You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation'" (Revelation 5:9).

Forgiveness is the subject of heaven. Forgiveness is the subject of earth. Forgiveness is the subject of the church. Forgiveness is the subject of both the Old and New Testament writings. Forgiveness is not just a new covenant concept. The Old Testament scriptures also abound with illustrations setting forth the utter destruction of sin, God's forgiveness, and rejoicing. The blood of Jesus flowed, as it were, backwards and forwards in man's redemption. Forgiveness is something to sing about in heaven and on earth. God reminds Israel of His forgiveness:

> I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you." **Sing** O heavens, for the Lord has done [it]! **Shout,** you lower parts of the earth; Break **forth** into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! (Isaiah 44:22).

Isaiah apply remarks:

> For You have cast all my sins behind Your back (38:17).

In the words of Micah:

> He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea (7:19).

God tells Jeremiah:

> `I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me (33:8).

Again, God reveals to Jeremiah the coming of a new covenant in which sin would be done away with once and for all:

> Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. "But this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, `Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (31:31-34).

This forgiveness of sins is what Paul details in the book of Romans. Jeremiah tells the "fact," but Paul details the "how." As Paul writes about this matchless love, this unfathomable mercy, this perfect holiness of God, one must stand in awe. In Romans 3: 23-26, Paul burst forth with rapturous language in describing the method God employs to justify man and yet at the same time exonerate His holiness in His actions.

> ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely **(δωρεαΨν, dwreaVn)** by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth [as] a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (3:23-26).

This word "freely" is also translated "without a cause" in John 15:25: "But [this] [happened] that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, `They hated Me without a cause' (δωρεαΨν). Since God is holy, God has to deal with sin in a way that His holiness is not questioned. God's righteous wrath against sin is an outward manifestation of His holiness. God cannot allow rebellion to go unpunished. Justice demands retribution. Thus, God devises a way to demonstrate His holiness, and yet at the same time justify sinful man. God's solution is "propitiation (ιΣλαστηψριον, **Jilasthvrion**) by His blood, through faith."

In the Hebrew Old Testament, the **Jilasthvrion** is called tr\P)K^ (k^pp)r#t, "mercy seat," "throne of mercy," "atonement"). This word refers to the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony where the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement (Numbers 7:89). Also, the author of Hebrews speaks of the covering on the Ark of the Covenant as a "mercy Seat." He writes:

> . . . and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which [were] the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat (ιΣλαστηψριον). Of these things we cannot now speak in detail (9:3-5).

Jesus, in the words of Paul, is God's mercy seat (ιΣλαστηψριον) [Romans 3:25] for sinful man. In other words, Christ is the site at which atonement takes place. In the Old Testament the atonement was looked upon by God alone, but in the New Testament the atonement is open for all to see, for the entire universe. John also speaks of Jesus as a propitiation: ". . . and He Himself is the propitiation (ιΣλασμοψ, Jilasmov") for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. The propitiation is God's mercy-seat, that is to say, God's throne of mercy (1 John 2:2).

This emancipation from God's righteous wrath, this freedom from the dominion of sin, this deliverance from the curse of law, and this redemption from condemnation is so complete and so perfect that the sinner is looked upon as absolutely justified and righteous before God. Since Jesus is our "wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption," then, let him "who glories . . . glory in the Lord," writes Paul (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). The law is now fulfilled in us since we are in Christ (Romans 8:3-5).

It is to this view of complete forgiveness of sins that the penman of Hebrews writes that there is nothing to prevent man approaching the throne of grace with the greatest of freedom; he says, "Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)." How is this access accomplished? Again, the same author tells us that it is through the blood. He senses the glory of the blood of Christ when he writes:

> Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and [having] a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Our right to **draw near** is affirmed by the blood of Jesus; He is our High Priest. Since we are now priests of God redeemed by the blood, the Holy Spirit encourages believers to approach God's throne. Even John, when Jesus rolls back the curtain of heaven, declares with transported joy: "To Him who

loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him [be] glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5b-6). Because we are redeemed priests, God exhorts believers to draw near.

Worship: Draw Near

What does it mean to draw near? To **draw near** is an act of worship. Worship in the New Testament is never identified with a so-called Sunday morning "worship service." Under the New Covenant there are no prescribed outward rituals for divine worship, such as five acts to be performed in a fixed order or enacted in a certain manner, nor a "set hour" for a worship service. Yes, it is true that Christians are to come together, but for what purpose? The purpose of believers coming together is never described as worship. But rather to strengthen and encourage one another in the faith lest some depart from the faith. The act of worship in the New Testament is in presenting your bodies a living sacrifice, which is your spiritual act of worship. In other words, the Father declares that we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices, which is our spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1-3). Whatever we do to His glory and honor becomes our spiritual offering. In this way all our actions become "thank offerings" to God. Our life is to be one of complete consecration to God.

This phrase, "let us draw near," conveys the idea of sacrifice. The word "enter" is a priestly word, at least in this context. Christians, as priests, approach the throne of God's grace through the blood of Christ. Since Christ Himself entered the holy place through His own blood, Christians are encouraged to come before the throne of grace. Once more, the writer of Hebrews explains the significance and efficacy of the blood of Christ:

> Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with **His own blood** He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, **how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself** without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (9:12-14).

Praise God for the blood! It is the blood of Christ that possesses the power to cleanse us and to make us fit to serve the living God. In some manner, this offering up of Jesus as sacrifice is done through the eternal Spirit who was in Jesus Christ when he shed His blood. It appears that the Holy Spirit lived and worked in that blood so that when it was shed it would not be a dead blood, but rather a living blood that could ascend, as it were, to heaven to exercise its divine power from there. How? I don't know. The word of God states it; therefore, I accept it.

Spiritual Offering of the Christian

In one's relationship to God as priest, there are no offerings that a Christian can bring other than a belief in honoring the blood of the Lamb of God in one's daily walk with Him and his fellow man. Every act that a Christian performs in response to Jesus as Lord is an act of worship that honors the blood of Christ. In the Old Testament, it was the duty of priests to offer up sacrifices or to attend to everything that was essential for ministry in the house of God, but in the New Testament, every Christian is to offer his life as a living sacrifice, which is his act of worship.

For the Believer, his or her service is not in rituals performed Sunday morning in a so-called worship service. In fact, the New Testament never speaks of a worship service for the believer. In the Messianic

age, there are no outward or external arrangements for divine worship. Worship does not start at 9 am and stop at 10 am, but rather it is one's way of life -- twenty-four hours a day. In Christianity, worship is in presenting one's body a living sacrifice, which is one's spiritual act of worship. As Leon Morris has made clear:

> To see Christ as having offered the perfect sacrifice that brings us salvation is not to enter a realm of cheap grace. It does not mean that we offer no sacrifice. It means that our sacrifice is of a different order. It is not atoning, but a costly response to a sacrifice that is atoning....Paul speaks of himself as being made a sacrifice in the service of other Christians (Phil. 2:17) and he refers to the gifts the Philippians Christians sent him as `a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God' (Phil. 4:18). The writer to the Hebrews refers to `a sacrifice of praise -- the fruit of lips that confess his name and he speaks of doing good and sharing with other as sacrifices with which God is well pleased (Heb. 13:15-16).

When one presents his or her body a living sacrifice, that involves a vertical as well as a horizontal relationship -- to God and man. God's grace teaches children of God to deny ungodliness and worldly lust and to live lives worthy of the One who redeemed them by His blood. One must never forget that "life is in the blood." To set the tone for a deeper meaning of the Lord's words about the "blood of the new covenant," one must reflect on the history behind this phrase.

Life in the Blood

"Life of the flesh is in the blood." What does that mean? Moses told the Israelites that "the life of the flesh [is] in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it [is] the blood [that] makes atonement for the soul." Without blood there can be no life for man. Without the blood of Jesus there can be no eternal life for man; Jesus confirms the validity of Leviticus when He cries out:

> I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this [Man] give us [His] flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you **eat the flesh** of the Son of Man and **drink His blood**, you have no life in you" (John 6:51-53).

This context appears to teach that faith is the means whereby one appropriates the flesh and blood of the Son of God. It is through faith that one lays claim to God's appointed sacrifice; namely, God's crucified One. Jesus is the source of life for the believer. Without His death and blood there could be no life. The Hebrew writers expressly states this teaching:

> How much more shall the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the **new covenant**, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. . . **without shedding of blood there is no remission** (9:14-15b).

The shedding of blood in the Old Testament looked forward to the coming of the final sacrifice, the sacrifice of Jesus. Again, the Hebrew writer says, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (10:12). The Old Testament foreshadowed the coming One's sacrifice for the salvation of man. For instance, the Scriptures declare: "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, [and] not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect" (Hebrews 10:1).

The real versus the shadow is clearly presented by the Holy Spirit. An understanding of this concept will assist one in his or her apprehension of the "real thing;" namely, Jesus. An awareness of the Old Testament shadows is indispensable to a proper sensitivity of redemption by the blood of Christ in the New Testament. R. L. Kilpatrick, editor of Ensign, paints an excellent portrait in presenting the redemptive drama set forth on the stage of the Old Testament in types and shadows. He says,

> The OT is the stage upon which the redemptive drama is 'pre-formed.' It is essential that the Christian system be seen against this kind of background. The greatest lesson in the OT on the true meaning of Gospel is seen in the Exodus. In fact, the Eodus is the very heart of the OT. "Exodus dominates the skyline of the OT history. It towers over the consciousness of Israel for all time to come. All future history is understood in light of that event. The deliverance becomes the pattern for all future deliverances."

Again, he writes about a visible screen on which to portray spiritual images:

> Just as Israel had her signs and seals that provided the framework for 'remembering' their redemption from Egyptian slavery, namely the Feast Days with all their trimmings -- regulated by the ordinance. In the Christian age it is still essential that we have a visible 'screen' on which to portray spiritual images....When we sit down to eat we realize that he is our true 'bread of life' and our 'living water'. . ."

As Kilpatrick points out, our visible screen is in the eating of bread and drinking of wine in the Lord's supper. Every time believers eat the bread and drink the wine, they are reminded of their redemption through the poured out blood of Jesus. Paul writes: "For as often as you **eat this bread** and **drink this cup**, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26). Matthew also summarizes that eventful night in which our Lord broke bread with His disciples. He captures this spiritual image when he writes:

> And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke [it], and gave [it] to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. "For this is **My blood** of the new covenant, **which is shed** for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:26-28).

In this Last Supper, one witnesses the drama set forth on the screen of the Old Testament. During this meal, Jesus acknowledges His death by referring to His blood ***being shed*** (εχκχυννοψμενον, ekcunnomenon, "poured out"). Also, Jesus interprets this act with the ***forgiveness of sins*** (ειξ α[φεσιν αΣμαρτιω'ν, ei" afesin jjJamartiwn), a phrase which neither Luke nor Mark has.

This **pouring out** is reminiscent of the "sin offering" ritual in Leviticus (chapter 16). Five times in the

fourth chapter of Leviticus, Moses repeats the same instruction: "And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of meeting; and he **shall pour the remaining blood** of the bull at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of meeting" (Leviticus 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34).

Egypt -- Blood – Passover

Forgiveness and redemption are always associated with blood. To illustrate this truth about blood, one needs to reflect on the event that spared the firstborn among the Israelites but destroyed the firstborn among the Egyptians. Moses details the instruction about blood for the preservation of the firstborn among the Israelites. Prior to the Exodus, God sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians for their refusal to allow the Israelites to leave. The tenth plague is the plague in which the children of Israel were instructed to kill a lamb and place the blood upon the two doorposts and upon the lintel. God said, "And they shall take [some] of the blood and put [it] on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it (Exodus 12:7)."

Thus, when the angel of God passed throughout the land of Egypt, the houses with the token of blood would be spared. The destroying angel would pass over the blood-smeared houses. The blood is what saved them. God instructed Moses to say: "Now **the blood shall be a sign** for you on the houses where you [are]. And **when I see the blood,** I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy [you] when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13).

Firstborn in Egypt and Goshen

That sign or token was to be the blood of the lamb. Those that did not have this token upon their doorposts and lintel would suffer the loss of "the firstborn." The houses that were covered with the lamb's blood were spared this loss. This redemption was not simply brought about through the exercise of God's power, but in accord with the righteous character of God. Some firstborn were destroyed, while others were spared. What determined their condemnation or redemption? The absence of the blood brought death, but the presence of the blood brought life.

Firstborn in Heaven

No wonder the Hebrew writer speaks of the Christian community as the ekklesia of the "firstborn ones" (12:23). The firstborn of the Israelites were redeemed with the blood of the Passover lamb; the firstborn ones of Christ are redeemed with the blood of the Lamb of God. The blood of Jesus is that which redeems. Is it any wonder that John records the praises offered by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders as appropriate to express the greatness of what God accomplishes for believers through the shed blood of Christ. "When I see the blood I will pass over you" is as true now as it was when God spoke these words to Moses. Do you see a parallel between the then and the now with the blood?

With the blood of God's Lamb, Jesus the Messiah, God covers the "firstborn ones," He passes over their sins just as he passed over the sins of the firstborn ones in Goshen. Through the blood there is life, not death; on the other hand, for those not covered by the blood, judgment thunders loud and clear. For those covered by the blood of the Lamb, they are justified, sanctified, washed, and redeemed. Earth and heaven ring out praise for such grace, for such mercy, for such love. These wonders not only fill the earth, but also the heavenly realm.

PREACHED:

Grassy Church of Christ (Arab, Alabama), November 16, 23, 24, 30, 1997, 10 am Bible study

Passover Traditions in the First Century

November 28, 1997

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-22; I Corinthians 10:16, 11:17-34

In order to understand the full import of what transpired on that eventful night with Jesus and His apostles, one must look at the Passover observance in the time of Christ. To begin with, it is significant that Jesus participated in activities that **were innovations** in the Passover as recorded in Exodus. Nevertheless, it goes almost without saying that even though there were alterations, these changes were not anti-Scriptural. In other words, these innovations did not violate any principle of commemoration ordained by God; for example, consider the following additions to the original Passover: (1) the introduction of four cups of wine, and (2) reclining. Originally, the eating of the Passover was done in haste, but in the time of Jesus, the custom was to recline or lean in token of one's freedom.[1] Thus, the Passover observance by Jesus includes details that were not practiced in the original Passover described by the Torah."[2]

The Custom of Reclining

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record this custom of reclining. All three synoptic Gospels state that Jesus and the twelve reclined in their observance of the Passover. For instance, Matthew writes: "And He said, `Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, `The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.' So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. When evening came, **Jesus was reclining** (αςνεψκειτο, ajnevkeito, **"he was reclining"**) at the table with the Twelve" (**Matthew. 26:18-20**). Mark writes: "So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover**.** In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they **sat** (αςνακειμεψνων, ajnakeimevnwn, **reclining**) and ate**,..." (14:16-17a**). Luke records: "When the hour had come, He **sat down** (αςνεψπεσεν, ajnevpesen, **he reclined**), and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, "With [fervent] desire I have desired **to eat this Passove**r with you before I suffer;" (**22:14-15**).[3]

The Custom of Drinking Four Cups of Wine

The custom of drinking wine is mentioned by all of the synoptic writers. For example, during this celebration, Jesus and His disciples filled their cups four different times.[4] Matthew and Mark record that Jesus took "a cup" (ποτηψριον),[5] but they do not tell us which of the four cups he used, nor do they mention the other three cups. On the other hand, Luke and Paul identify "the cup" as the third cup in the Passover.[6] They identify "the cup" that Jesus took to institute His supper by revealing to us that this cup was the cup "after supper," that is to say, after the eating of the paschal lamb. Also, Luke is the only one that mentions two of the four cups shared in the Passover.[8] On the other hand, Paul is the only one that gives the name of the cup employed.[9]

Each filling received a particular name to focus attention on their blessings and redemption from bondage. For example, the first filling was called "**the Cup of Consecration**"**;** the second filling was called **"the Cup of Proclamation"**; the third filling was called by two names, namely, [1] "**the Cup of Blessing**" and "**the Cup of Redemption**," which also represented the blood of the Paschal lamb;[10] and the fourth filling was called "**the Cup of Hallel,**" that is to say the Cup of Praise.

The Third Cup of the Passover Meal

The **third cup** was the most appropriate for Christ to institute His memorial to represent His blood of the new covenant. Since this **third filling,** to the Israelites, represented **the blood of the Paschal lamb** slain to protect the firstborn in Goshen, then, this third cup was the most suitable for Jesus to utilize to represent His blood shed or poured out for the redemption of the firstborn ones. Jesus tells the disciples, "This is my blood of the new covenant." Just as the third drinking was drunk to remind them of their redemption from Egyptian bondage, so, today, the third cup (the Cup of Redemption) is drunk to remind Christians of their redemption from sin through the pouring out of Jesus' blood upon Calvary.

This is the thought that Matthew conveys to those to whom he writes in his Gospel. He says, "He took the **cup (**ποτηψριον**)**, and gave thanks, and **gave** [it] to them, saying, **"Drink** from it (αυςτου'), all of you. 'For **this** (του'το, tou'to) is My **blood** (τοΨ αι/μαψ μου, toV |aimav mou) of the new covenant**,** which **is shed** (τοΨ εςκχυννοψμενον, toV ejkcunnovmenon,) for many for the remission of sins'" (ειϛ α[φεσιν αΣμαρτιω'ν, eij" a[fesin Jamartiw'n).[11] "Is shed" is an attributive participle[12] in Greek. Since this participle is nominative case,[13] neuter gender, and singular number, it must agree with the noun it modifies in case, gender, and number. This participle (τοΨ εςκχυννοψμενον) modifies the noun blood (αι/μα),[14] which is nominative, neuter, and singular. Also the word "blood" is predicate nominative, which means that it is identical to its subject, "this" (του'το). The antecedent[15] of "this" is "it," (aujtou') and the antecedent of "it" is "cup" (ποτηψριον). Also, the word "cup" is nominative case, neuter gender, and singular number. Thus, according to Greek syntax, the cup is that which they were to drink and that which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.[16]

This is My Blood of the New Covenant

It is in order for us to devote a brief amount of space to one of the most controversial sayings in the Eucharistic words of Jesus.[17] When Jesus said "**This cup is** the new covenant," or "**This is my blood** of the new covenant," What did He intent to convey? In seeking a clear understanding of this startling phrase about the "new covenant," one must keep in mind the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices to fully appreciate the sacrificial language of Jesus in associating His **blood** that is **poured out** with the new covenant and with the forgiveness of sins. The words employed by Jesus are very similar to the vocabulary spoken by Moses: "And Moses took the blood, sprinkled [it] on the people, and said, `This is

the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words'" (**Exodus 24:8**).

What is the story behind these words spoken by Moses? Moses informs us that on a specially made altar, burnt and peace offerings were offered up, not by priests but by young men of the children of Israel. Then, the blood was collected and divided into two portions. After the blood was collected into two bowls, one portion was thrown upon the altar, the other portion over the people. After throwing blood upon the altar, Moses then read from the "book of the covenant." Next, when Moses threw the blood from the second bowl over the people, he said, "This is the blood of the covenant."

Moses penned these words about the "blood of the covenant" around 1445 BC, approximately 800 years before Jeremiah (**31:31-34**) spoke of God's new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. This covenant was temporary; it was not intended to be permanent. As mentioned above, Jeremiah prophesied approximately 800 years after the time of Moses concerning the new covenant. Then, about 600 years after Jeremiah, Jesus announced the new covenant. Jesus made this surprising statement during the Passover meal. Three words, loaded with theological meaning, stand out; namely, (1) blood, (2) covenant, and (3) new. What does "this is my blood" really signify? In order to appreciate the full import of the blood of Jesus, one must also consider the meaning of covenant, especially "new covenant," for it relates to the blood.

This Cup is the New Covenant

Jesus ate His last Passover meal with His disciples on the night of His betrayal. During this meal, Jesus says, as reported by Luke and Paul, "**This cup is the new covenant** in My blood. This do, as often as you drink [it], in remembrance of Me," (1 Corinthians. 11:25). On the other hand, Matthew and Mark give His words: "For **this is My blood of the new covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," (Matthew. 26:28). There is a difference in wording between Paul/ Luke and Matthew/Mark. Matthew and Mark read "**This** (του'το, touto) is my blood (τοΨ αι/μαψ μου, toV ai|mav mou)[18] of the new covenant," but Paul and Luke read "**This cup** (Του'το τοΨ ποτηψριον, Tou'to toV pothvrion) **is the new covenant** in my blood." But Luke, unlike Paul, adds an additional clause: τοΨ υΣπεΨρ υΣμω'ν εςκχυννοψμενον (toV JupeVr Jumw'n ejkcunnovmenon, "that is poured out for you"). This clause is an attributive participle in Greek and refers to "cup." Since an attributive participle is adjectival in nature, it must modify a noun or pronoun. The Greek participle is similar in function to the participle in English.

In English, the participle modifies the nearest noun, but this is not necessarily so in Greek. It may, but there are other factors to consider in determining which noun or pronoun the attributive participle modifies[19]. To illustrate the English participle, consider the following sentence: "The man, ***sitting*** by the door, is my Greek teacher." In this example, ***sitting*** is a participle telling us something about the noun, man. The participle modifies its nearest noun, man. But in Greek, the participle must agree with its noun in case, number, and gender, not the nearest noun as in English.

Since a participle is a verbal adjective, it shares the characteristics of both verbs and adjectives. As a verb participles have tense[20] (present, aorist, perfect) and voice[21] (active, middle, passive). As an adjective the participle must agree with the word it is modifying in case, number, and gender. In other words, the participle, in Greek, must be the same case, number, and gender as the noun that it modifies. This rule is crucial to a proper translation of the Greek New Testament. This law of grammar is top priority to a proper understanding of the "cup" saying in Luke's Gospel. Luke tells us that the "**cup** that

is **poured out** is the new covenant in my blood."

Many Christians apply an English rule of grammar to Luke's cup saying, rather than Greek syntax, that is to say, the participle modifies the nearest noun. For example, a common translation of **Luke 22:20** is as follows: "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup [is] the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you, (**Luke 22:20**, KJV). In the KJV "Which is shed for you" is a non-restrictive adjectival[22] clause with the relative pronoun "which." An adjectival clause may be introduced with relative pronouns, such as "that" or "which." In this English translation, the participle "shed" (poured out) is nearer the word "blood," not "cup." Thus, according to the English rules of grammar, "poured out" modifies its nearest antecedent, "blood." But with Greek syntax, as stated above, the participle does not necessarily modify its nearest antecedent, but its nearest antecedent must be in the same case, number, and gender.

In other words, the participle in Greek, unlike English, must refer to the noun or pronoun of the same case, number, and gender. For example, the present passive participle (being shed) in Luke is nominative case, singular number, and neuter gender.[23] Therefore, the noun to which the participle in Luke refers must also be nominative case, singular number, and neuter gender. Grammatically the only word in this sentence that the participle can modify is cup. The noun, "cup" (τοΨ ποτηψριον, **toV pothvrion**), is nominative case, singular number, and neuter gender. On the other hand "in my blood" (εςν τω' αἰματιψ μου, **ejn tw'/ {aimativ mou**) is singular number, neuter gender, and **dative case,**[24] not nominative. This understanding of Greek syntax will assist one in grasping the sense in which Luke uses the term "cup."

What was "being shed," or poured out? Luke says that the cup was poured out. Luke and Paul give the words of Jesus as "this cup," but Luke adds "that is poured out,"[25] which modifies cup in this context, not blood. But, on the other hand, Matthew and Mark give the words as "this is my blood that is poured out." As mentioned above, in Matthew and Mark, the attributive participle modifies "blood." Blood is equivalent to "this," since blood is predicate nominative.[26] But the antecedent of "this" is "it" and the antecedent of "it" is "cup." Both "blood" and "cup" are nominative case, singular number, and neuter gender. The rule of Greek syntax confirms that it is "blood" that is poured out in Matthew/Mark, but in Luke, it is the "cup" that is poured out. Thus, the "cup" in Luke is equivalent to "blood" in Matthew and Mark.

In both Luke and Paul, cup is used for blood. What is poured out? Is it a literal container or blood? Which? Thus, Luke identifies the cup as the blood that is also mentioned in both Matthew and Mark. In Matthew/Mark, the word "blood" agrees with the attributive participle, but also does the word "cup." But in **Luke 22:20** "blood" is dative, not nominative ("cup" is nominative). Therefore, the word "cup" is utilized for "blood," because it is that which is poured out. The blood of Christ represents this new covenant and at the same time it is the blood that seals the new covenant. Nevertheless, all the accounts mean the same thing. Whether one says, "**This cup i**s the new covenant in my blood," or "**This is my blood** of the new covenant," there is no material change. The ποτηψριον (cup) is synonymous with blood, not a literal container or vessel. The blood is that which is poured out.

The New Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible translate according to Greek syntax.

> And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20, NRSV).

> And in the same way [He took] the cup after they had eaten, saying, "**This cup which is poured out** for you is the new covenant in My blood (**Luke 22:20**, NASB).

Notice that NRSV and the NASV both translate the attributive participle (τοΨ υΣπεΨρ υΣμω'ν εςκχυννοψμενον, toV JupeVr Jumw'n ejkcunnovmenon, "that (which) is poured out for you"), in **Luke 22:20**, as an adjectival clause modifying the noun "cup."

Jesus spoke of the blood as representative of the new covenant. This new covenant brings the people of God into a personal relationship with Him through the forgiveness of sins. It goes almost without saying, **this new covenant** constitutes a radical alteration from the old covenant. This new covenant represents a revolutionary break with the past. It represents a new approach to man's problem of relationship to God. In other words, God deals with sin once and for all. This new covenant answers this problem.

This new covenant is based on **forgiveness.** Under the first covenant, their failure to comply with the law nullified the covenant. That covenant depended upon obedience of the people. On the other hand, the new covenant relies upon the obedience of Christ, not man. Jesus is the new covenant, not a book.[27] Thus, the new covenant would not be invalidated through lack of perfect obedience on the part of man. In other words, God provided the means whereby He could put away sin once and for all.

In seeking to draw attention to the wonder of this amazing truth, God through Jeremiah set forth the superiority of the new over the old: **"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah. 31:31-34).** Further, this covenant, according to Jeremiah, is "an everlasting covenant" (**32:40**). Also, Ezekiel speaks of this covenant as an "everlasting covenant" (**Ezekiel 16:60**) as well as a "covenant of peace" (**37:27**). Isaiah also writes about this covenant as an "everlasting covenant" (**Isaiah 55:3**).[28]

Jesus Prophetically the Covenant

Leon Morris captures the essence of the new covenant when he writes: "This new covenant would be based on forgiveness, not on a profession of readiness to keep the law of God."[29] Exactly, how this is to be accomplished, the prophets do not disclose completely. Jeremiah, as mentioned above, sets forth the **fact,** not the **how** of the new covenant. On the other hand, God through Isaiah, one hundred years earlier, tells the **how,** but not as fully developed as in Paul's writings. Nevertheless, Jeremiah speaks of Jesus prophetically as "the covenant." For instance, God exclaims: "I, the Lord, have called **You** in righteousness, And will hold **Your** hand; I will keep **You** and give **You** as a **covenant** to the people, As a **light** to the Gentiles." (**Isaiah 42:6**).

Yet, the Israelites only faintly understood these prophetic utterances. In fact, even after the coming of Christ, men still wanted to know about whom the prophet spoke, of himself or some other man. Luke narrates such a story in the book of Acts. He informs us that a man from Ethiopia sought an answer from Philip as of whom the prophet **Isaiah** speaks. Philip begins with **chapter 53** and preaches unto him Jesus.

God deals with the sin problem in and through Jesus Christ. In this way God demonstrates His righteousness ***in*** and ***through*** Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, God confirms His righteousness in justifying the ungodly by setting forth Jesus as a propitiation for sins. Forgiveness of sins can only be forgiven through the pouring out of His blood. Our Lord restated this thought in the Passover with His disciples. His blood not only ratified the new covenant, but His death was also substitutionary. In other words,

Jesus died **for us.** He poured out his soul **for many** for the forgiveness of sins. These words of Jesus, as reported by Matthew (**26:28**), also point to **Isaiah 53**, especially verse **12**,

> Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
> And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
> Because He **poured out His soul** unto death,
> And He was numbered with the transgressors,
> And He **bore the sin of many,**
> And made intercession for the transgressors.

Deliverance is only through substitution. That was the meaning of the blood of the slaughtered paschal lamb. Jesus poured out His soul **for me.** The death that Jesus died was **my death.** He died **for me.** He bore **my sins.** He died in **my place.** The words "for me" and "in my place" should be upon the heart of everyone. Deliverance by the blood was the outcome of divine wisdom. Those seeking emancipation from eternal death must exercise faith in the blood; they can be assured that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin: "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (**Matthew 26:28**)."

Message Delivered at theFollowing Congretations

Grassy Church of Christ
Grassy, Alabama
December 7, 1998
10 a.m. – Bible Study

Eddy Church of Christ
Arab, AL
July 19, 1998
10 a.m. – Bible Study

Rocky Creek Church of Christ
Lucedale, Mississippi
August 12, 1998
7 p.m. – Wednesday Services

ENDNOTES

[1] Harold A. Sevener, ed., ***Messianic Passover Haggadah*** (NC: Chosen People Ministries, Inc, nd), 16 where Sevener says, "The youngest child continues to ask: ... 4. ´On all other nights we eat either sitting upright or reclining; why on this night do we all recline?'"

[2]For a detailed view of the Passover in the time of Christ, see Dallas Burdette's essay, **"The Eucharistic Setting in the Synoptics and Paul."**

[3] The NIV translates **Matt. 26:20**: "When evening came, **Jesus was reclining** at the table with the Twelve"; the NASB translates **Matt. 26:20**: "Now when evening had come, **He was reclining** [at the table] with the twelve disciples."

[4] Ceil and Moishe Rosen, ***Christ in the Passover: Why is this Night Different?*** (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 71 says, "Also at the seder table, beside each place setting, are small wine goblets -- small because they will be filled with the sweet, red Passover wine four times during the seder. The custom of drinking four cups of wine dates back to ancient Temple times. The Mishnah teaches that, according to two authorities, Rabbi Yohanon and Rabbi Benayah, these four cups correspond to the four verbs in **Exodus 6:6-7**, describing God's redemption: I will *bring* you out; I will *deliver* you; I will *redeem* you; I will *take* you to be my people."

[5] The definite article (to;) is found in the Alexandrian or Egyptian type of text. See Nestle-Aland, ***Greek New Testament, 4th addition,*** (United Bible Societies: Germany, 1993), 102.

[6] See **Luke 22:20**: "Likewise He also [took] the cup **after supper (**meta; to; deipnh´sai7**)**, saying, "This cup [is] the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." See also **I Cor. 11:25**: "In the same manner [He] also [took] the cup **after supper,** saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink [it], in remembrance of Me." **"After supper"** is the clue in determining the cup that Jesus instituted His supper with. The participants always filled their cups with wine following the eating of the Passover lamb; this filling constituted the third cup, which is called "the Cup of Blessing."

[8] See **Luke 20:14-22**. The cup in **verse 17** is not the same cup mentioned in **verse 2**0.

[9] "**The cup of blessing** which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (**1Cor 10:16**).

[10] Ceil and Moshe Rosen, ***Christ in the Passover,*** *84 says****,"im***mediately following that prayer, the host leads again in the blessing over the wine, and everyone drinks the third cup, commemorating the verse in Exodus 6:6b: ´I will redeem you with a stretched out arm.' This third cup is the ***cup of redemption,*** also at times called the ***cup of blessing***. It is the ***cup of redemption*** because, say the ancient commentaries, it represents the blood of the Paschal lamb." See also Sevener, ***Messianic Passover Haggadah****,* 38 writes "This cup that represents the New Covenant is the Cup of Redemption. It is the cup after the supper which our Messiah used to symbolize His death. Because we know it is the Cup of Redemption (the cup after supper), we know that it was the Afikomen that He used to symbolize His death and resurrection. The scriptures tell us that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin (cf. **Heb 9:22**). The scriptures further state that the life of the flesh is in the blood (cf. **Lev. 17:11**)."

[11] **Matthew 26:27-28**.

[12] A participle in the attributive position has the definite article; when the participle is in the predicate position it does not have the definite article. The participle is a verbal adjective. In fact, it is both a verb and adjective at the same time. Since a participle is an adjective, like any other adjective, it will describe a substantive and will agree in gender, number, and case with that substantive.

[13] **Case** is the distinction or mark of separation, which denotes the grammatical relation of a noun or a pronoun to other words in a communication. The purpose of case is to show relationship of words to each other. Thus, case has a distinct idea with separate forms for each image. These distinctions (ideas) are present in the Greek New Testament in order to express thoughts clearly. Some grammars give eight cases, while some only list five cases. But even within the five case system, the grammarians have developed various nuances to still describe the eight case functions to express accurately the thoughts of the person communicating his ideas to others. The case of a word in Greek is indicated by the "case ending." In other words, the case ending is a suffix added to the end of the word. For example, the word "apostle" in Greek has eight (five) cases to denote its various functions. If it is the subject (subjective case), it will end with a sigma (s), but if it is functioning as a direct object of the sentence, it takes a case ending Nu (n) that is equivalent to the "objective" case in English.

[14] In Luke's account, the participle does not modify blood, but cup. In Luke the word blood is "dative case," not "nominative case" as in Matthew's account. In Greek grammar, since the participle is a verbal adjective, the participle must agree with its noun or pronoun in "case." In Matthew, both "blood" and "poured out" are "nominative case," but not so in Luke. The participle in Luke, according to Greek grammar, can only modify "cup" which is "nominative case."

[15]House and Harman writes, p 45: "The word, phrase, or clause for which the pronoun stands is called the **antecedent** of that pronoun. Most pronouns have antecedent either expressed or implied, and they should agree with their antecedents in person, number, and gender. In ***John gave me his books, and I gave them to his sister***, ***John*** is the antecedent of ***his***; and ***books*** is the antecedent of ***them***....The antecedent of a pronoun may be another pronoun or a phrase or a clause. In ***Everyone has his wishes sometimes denied***, the antecedent of ***his*** is the pronoun ***everyone***."

[16] The Greek attributive participle is dealt with more fully under the caption, "This Cup is the New Covenant."

[17] There are many Christians who believe that "the cup" refers to a container, not to the blood of Christ. And, as a result of this misunderstanding, these "one cup" brethren will not fellowship other Christians if they employ individual communion cups in the distribution of the fruit of the vine. This section briefly sets forth, hopefully, a sounder understanding of the term "cup" as it is utilized in the Gospels and Paul. Also, see a forth-coming article on the meaning of "cup" in the Synoptics and Paul by Dallas Burdette in the Fall of 1998.

[18] "Blood" is nominative case, not instrumental (dative of means) case.

[19] Matthew and Mark also use an attributive participle. Both men employed their participles to modify the noun blood, which is nominative case, neuter gender, and singular number, according to Greek syntax. The participle must agree with the noun it modifies. This study of Greek participles is too detailed for an exhaustive study for our purpose in this paper. See my forthcoming article on the cup sayings in the Fall of 1998.

[20]Tense is the quality of the verb that has to do with action. In other words, tense is time: past, present, future, etc.

[21] Voice is that quality of verbs that indicates the relationship of the subject to the action. That is to say, the active voice means that the subject is acting, ("he is loosing") the passive voice means that the subject is being acted upon ("he is being loosed"), and the middle voice represents the subject as acting in reference to himself. For example, "I am hearing myself" (direct middle), or "I am hearing for myself" (indirect middle). The middle voice is a "subjective" personal voice.

[22] House and Harmon, ***Descriptive English Grammar***, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1950), 304, state: "But nonrestrictive participial phrases require punctuation. Commas usually set them off. ***The general, seeing the day lost, ordered a retreat*** contains a nonrestrictive modifier, and the comma after ***general*** and the one after ***lost*** are necessary to indicate the meaning which the modifying phrase conveys. It is well to remember that nonrestrictive modifiers are not essential to the principal thought of the sentence. The chief idea to be communicated in the above sentence is ***The general ordered a retreat,*** and the participial phrase merely gives additional information. As a rule the participial phrase which introduces a sentence is nonrestrictive; as, *Having been offended, he refused to come."*

[23] Greek has eight cases: (1) nominative [case of designation], (2) genitive [case of description], (3) ablative [case of separation], (4) dative [case of interest], (5) locative [case of location or position], (6) instrumental [case which expresses means], (7) accusative [case of limitation -- its main usage is that of direct object], (8) vocative [case of direct address]; number [singular or plural]; gender [masculine, feminine, neuter]. See Ray Summers, ***Essentials of New Testament Greek*** (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), 16-18.

[24] " Blood" (**ejn tw'/ ai{mativ mou, ejn tw'/ {aimativ mou**) in the Greek case is instrumental (by), not dative (to). The dative "(to"), the instrumental ("by"), and the locative ("in") cases are identical in form.

[25] Since the participle is verbal as well as adjectival in nature, one must determine whether the participle is verbal or adjectival. But since this participle is attributive, then, it is adjectival in nature. The present passive participle modifies "cup." Thus the translation is restrictive, not nonrestrictive. In other words, the participle clause identifies "cup" as that which is poured out. An English sentence should help to clarify this rule. House and Harman write, p 303,304: "In ***The girl wearing the red sweater is my sister***, we have a restrictive participial modifier, and hence no commas or other punctuation marks are needed. The phrase ***wearing the red sweater*** identifies the girl, and the sentence containing this phrase is read or spoken without any pauses."

[26] The predicate nominative or subjective complement defines or describes the subject. The subjective complement is a noun or an adjective or the equivalent of either which completes the predicate and refers to the subject. When the subjective complement is a substantive (noun or pronoun), it is called a "predicate nominative." Whenever the subjective complement is an adjective or any word or phrase used for an adjective, it is called the "attribute complement" or predicate adjective. The subject and verb are joined with a linking verb (am, are, was, were, etc). For example, in the sentence, **I am he,** ***he*** is a pronoun in the nominative case which completes the predicate (***am***), refers to the subject (***I***), and is in a sense identical with the subject. Another example should suffice to illustrate the predicate nominative: Washington was made Commander-in-chief. **Washington** and **Commander-in-chief** are the same person. Both nouns are in the nominative case, the former being the subject, the latter the predicative

nominative. The verb "to be" is followed by a predicate nominative, never a direct object. See House and Harmon, ***Descriptive English Grammar***, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1950), 232-238. "This is my blood." Blood is a predicate nominative, that is to say, the word "blood" is the same as the subject (This). But the antecedent of "this" is "it" and the antecedent of "it" is "cup." Even in Matthew/Mark, the "cup" and "blood" are synonymous.

[27] See **Isaiah 42:6,:** "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles,

[28]Since the "blood" represents the "new covenant," a few comments on the "new covenant" is appropriate in concluding this subject on the traditions in the Passover. It goes, almost without saying, that the "new covenant" is not twenty-seven books that one calls the New Testament, but, rather, the "new covenant" is a new relationship with God based upon the atoning work of Christ. It is a relationship grounded on faith, not works. This is, do doubt, the reason that Jesus is given to sinful man as "Covenant." It is through Jesus that one enters into a new relationship with God.

[29] Leon Morris, ***The Atonement: Its Meaning & Its Significance*** (Illinois: Inter Varsity, 1983), 30.

The Meaning of the Eucharistic Sayings in the Synoptics and Pauline Writings

Thrust statement: **The blood of Christ represents the new covenant, which was made possible by the pouring out of His blood upon Calvary.**

Scripture reading: **Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-20; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

This essay, unlike the previous essay on the Passover, will describe and explore in greater detail the historical setting of the Last Supper in order to establish a greater comprehension of the Eucharistic[1] sayings in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul. An understanding of the Passover traditions in the first century should enhance one's ability to interpret the Synoptic writings as well as the Pauline Epistle of First Corinthians in which the Last Supper is portrayed. Some scholars do not believe that the Last Supper occurred during the Passover meal. But this mindset is not just limited to just several Biblical scholars. Today, some Christians also maintain that the Lord's Supper did not take place during the annual celebration of their exodus from Egypt. Yet, the evidence derived from the New Testament and outside sources confirm that the Last Supper did indeed happen during this sacred meal.[2]

When Christians fail to understand the traditions of the Passover in the first-century, this lack of perception can result in some rather bizarre interpretations of the Eucharistic sayings, chiefly among some believers associated with the one-cup and nonSunday school fellowships/churches. The positive evidence that this meal was a Passover meal is that this particular gathering occurred in the city, not in the suburbs of Jerusalem. Also, this meal transpired at night, not in the late afternoon. Another part of positive evidence is that a hymn was sung at the end of the meal, which was true of the Passover observance in the first-century. Another piece of evidence is that during the Passover in the first century, individuals reclined rather than sat around a table (**Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:14**). Additionally, the Passover lamb, the bitter herbs, and so on, also lends credence to the Passover festivity. Last, but not least, four ritualistic cups were employed during the Passover: (1) The Cup of Consecration, (2) The Cup of Proclamation, (3) The Cup of Blessing, and (4) The Cup of Hallel [praise].[3]

One of the four ritualistic cups stands out in this meal, namely, The Cup of Blessing, the cup "after supper" (**1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25**). Luke also identifies this particular cup with the phrase "after supper" [μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι, meta to deipnhsai] (**Luke 22:20**), which simply means after the meal proper. Prior to the eating of the Passover meal, two other cups were drunk—The Cup of Consecration and The Cup of Proclamation. Neither Matthew nor Mark identifies the particular cup; the phrase "after supper" is absent from their accounts. Paul is the only one of the writers who identifies the name of the cup utilized—"The Cup of Blessing." On the other hand, Luke is the only one who mentions two of the four cups (**Luke 22:7-23**)—second and third cups.

What does the name "The Cup of Blessing" (τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας, to pothrion eulogias)[4] signify? For the Jews, this cup symbolized their thanksgiving to God for His deliverance from Egyptian bondage, which was a blessing. Today, this third cup is the cup that signifies redemption from the kingdom of Satan and transference to God's kingdom. In other words, this Cup of Blessing reminds each believer of God's atonement for the redemption of humanity, namely, Jesus. Paul adds an additional saying of Jesus: "do this in remembrance of me" (**1 Corinthians 11:24, 25**). Of this cup, Jesus says, "This is my blood of the covenant" (**Matthew 26:28**). In other word, this third cup represented His covenant blood. This expression—"blood of the Covenant"—is confusing to many Christians. Gustaf Dalman writes: "This leads to the translation 'This is my covenant-blood'. The interpreting words would in this case mean: 'The wine of the cup which I offer to you, signifies to you a covenant-blood, which, moreover, will soon be contained in my blood'".[5] This Cup of Blessing is the most appropriate cup to represent redemption from the bondage of sin. Many Christians within the one-cup and nonSunday school movement misunderstand this expression about the "blood of the Covenant". In fact, many of these Christians identify the literal drinking vessel as representing the new covenant, not the blood. In a debate between E. H. Miller and M. L. Lemley (80 years old at the time of the written debate), Miller states:

> Brother Lemley may say, "The cup" is the "blood—which ratifies the covenant." But Jesus will differ with him; for Jesus said as just quoted, **"This cup, he said, is the new covenant ratified by my blood which is to be poured out on your behalf."** So the cup is the covenant ratified by the blood, but is not the blood that ratified the covenant. If Lemley says, "Notice it says, 'which is shed for you,' or as Weymouth's translations says, 'which is poured out on your behalf,' and that which 'is shed' or 'poured out' refers to 'the cup," I will have to differ with him, for Jesus did not shed a cup. Alford's Greek New Testament with English notes says, "These words can not be of TO POTERION (Greek for **"the cup"** E.H. M.), which is not poured out." [6]

THE IMPLIED READER VERSUS THE REAL READER

Since this essay seeks to unfold the context of the various Eucharistic sayings, it is necessary to call attention to the original readers and the readers of today. Many twenty-first century readers still read "the cup" or "a cup" and automatically assume that this indicates one container for the distribution (divide among yourselves—**Luke 22:17**) of the fruit of the vine. This is not just a phenomenon among the one-cup fellowship, but it is also widespread among many scholars. Contrary to the views of many Christians concerning the meaning of "cup" as a literal drinking vessel, this author states

emphatically that "The Cup of Blessing" did not refer to a single drinking vessel, but rather to the ritualistic cup—name given to a particular filling of their cups. In other words, there were "four formal drinkings of the cup at the Passover service."[7] In the Passover, each participant had his or her own cup.[8] During this ceremony, the participants filled their cups four different times; each filling was referred to as "the cup." This essay analyzes this unique expression—"The Cup of Blessing"—in light of the historical background of the Passover. The answer to this confusing problem does not lie in the use of Lexicons (Greek dictionaries), but rather in the historical background to the Passover in the first-century, which the *implied reader* understood.[9]

Since God's revelation is given in story form to His people, this arrangement of communication enables them to arrive at a more precise identification in seeking answers to complex problems that divide many Christians. Literary criticism is one means of gaining a greater insight to the author's meaning(s). Literary criticism, for example, controls the looseness that is frequently employed in the investigation of a solitary phrase.[10] Literary criticism recognizes that a single text or multiple texts are a part of a larger whole. Hayes and Holladay have correctly stated: "In attempting to understand a particular text, the exegete should seek to see the text within the structure of the major context as well as within the structure of the sub-units.[11] When the reader poses questions about the literary placement of certain passages, he or she is able to arrive at certain conclusions that might otherwise be missed. Literary analysis of a text helps one to focus more closely upon the individual texts. This form of interpretation assists one in grasping more fully the intent of the author.

This philosophy of interpretation dealing with the complete text is thoroughly worked out by Mark Allen Powell in his study guide on narrative criticism.[12] He points out justly: "Literary criticism focuses on the finished form of the text."[13] Again, Powell states the matter even more firmly, "Literary analysis does not dissect the text but discerns the connecting threads that hold it together."[14] Dissecting the text from its context contributes often times to an improper application of the text. The goal of literary criticism is to read the text as the *implied reader*[15] read the text.

The *implied reader* may know things that are not in the text. But, on the other hand, the *real reader* frequently consults outside reading in order to understand the text more fully. A classic example of this concept of distinguishing between the *implied reader* and the *real reader* is found in my study on "The Passover Traditions in the First Century. Seymour Chatman in drawing attention to the meaning of the *implied reader* puts it this way: "The counterpart of the implied author is the *implied reader*—not the flesh-and-bones you or I sitting in our living rooms reading the book, but the audience presupposed by the narrative itself."[16] Narrative criticism helps to narrow the gap between the *real reader* and the *implied reader*.[17]

SCHOLARS DISAGREE

Scholars are divided over whether the Lord's Supper occurred before the Passover (Kiddush meal) or during the Passover.[18] Joachim Jeremias advances the belief that the Last Supper occurred during the Passover, but, at the same time, he cites the conviction,

according to some scholars, that the Supper did not occur during the Passover since Matthew and Mark indicate that only one cup was used in the Last Supper; therefore, it could not have been the Passover since, in the time of Jesus, each one had his or her own cup.[19] This failure to grasp the significance of the words of Mathew and Mark has led some to deny that the Lord's Super occurred during the Passover—remember, cups were employed in the Passover. G. H. Box makes his arguments against the Last Supper as a Passover meal since both Matthew and Mark mention only one cup (container). Box, as well as many other scholars, is mistaken in this view; nevertheless, he writes with conviction that the Last Supper did not occur during the Passover:

> In all the accounts it is noticeable that *one* Cup only is mentioned which was partaken of by all; whereas at the Passover a special point is made of each man having his own Cup to drink from. This is a point which is often overlooked, and to which it will be necessary to return.[20]

Since Box misunderstood the phraseology in Matthew and Mark concerning the "cup" saying, he then drew conclusion that denied an original witness' testimony (Matthew) concerning the time frame of the Lord's Supper—the Passover. Box states his reasons for denying the Lord's Supper occurred during the Passover since both Matthew and Mark mention, according to his interpretation, only one cup. Jeremias, a contributor to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, writes concerning this dispute:

> On the other hand, it is claimed that by the time of Jesus *individual cups were used* at the Passover meal; since, according to Mark 14.23 par., all the people present at the Last Supper drank from the same cup, supposedly this is evidence for the fact that the Last Supper could not have been a Passover meal.[21]

Box, and many other scholars, read **Mark 14:23**, not with the eyes of the *implied* reader, but with the eyes of the *real reader*, that is to say with the eyes of the twentieth or twenty-first century—falling into subjective dreamland. Unfortunately, the reading and interpretation of the Eucharistic sayings often flows from a fertile imagination, not the text itself. G. H. Box's reasoning is a classic example of one who fails to read the text in the eyes of the original readers, and, as a result of this failure, he denies that the Last Supper occurred during the Passover meal. Yet, the Synoptics specifically state that the Last Supper took place during the Passover. Box writes with boldness concerning his denial of the Last Supper as having occurred during a Passover meal. Since, in his understanding, both Matthew and Mark mention only one cup, he concludes that this meal was a Kiddush (קִדּוּשׁ, q!DDWv, "sanctification") meal, not a Passover meal since only one cup was employed.[22] In 1928, F. Gavin also denied that the Eucharist occurred during the Passover:

> The *Berakha* par excellence was for the early Christians the Eucharist, which term may well have been the attempt to render the Hebrew noun into Greek. For the explanation of the origin of the Christian Eucharist, we must look rather to the Fellowship Supper of the Eve (the *Kiddush*) than to the Passover, and, in order to explain its significance and unique character, to the early evaluation of our Lord.[23]

What is the answer to the dilemma that scholars face in trying to determine the historical background to the Lord's Supper? The answer lies in understanding the practice of the Passover in the time of Christ. Not only do some Christians fail to understand the traditions in the first century, but they also turn to Greek dictionaries (lexicons) to determine the meaning of the word *cup*. Dictionaries are extremely helpful, but the definition of a word does not necessarily define the word in its context. Prior to an examination of the Eucharistic sayings in the Synoptics and Paul, a few words about Greek lexicons are in order. Not all Greek lexicons or scholars so define the word *cup* as a drinking vessel in the various Eucharistic versions.

UTILIZATION OF LEXICONS

Thayer's Greek—Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

Among the one-cup movement, many preachers and teachers rely heavily upon the use of lexicons to establish credence for their interpretation of the Eucharistic texts, especially *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*.[24] As one seeks to determine the meaning of a word in a given context, one should be conscious that a lexicon does not always tell the whole story. Even though dictionaries are important, one must also consult the context before assigning a particular meaning to a particular word. Since a lexicographer often employs his own understanding of the text, one must make sure that he or she is giving a definition that the author intended to convey in the telling of his or her story. One's definition should be the meaning assigned by the author of the first-century, not the twenty-first century. To illustrate this point more clearly, this author wishes to cite the words of Joseph Henry Thayer, a Greek lexicographer. He was conscious of the dangers that lexicographers encounter when they seek to define a word or words. As a result of this awareness, he issues a warning in the use of lexicons:

> The nature and use of the New Testament writings require that the lexicographer should not be hampered by a too rigid adherence to the rules of scientific lexicography. A student often wants to know not so much the inherent meaning of a word as the particular sense it bears in a given context or discussion:—or to state the same truth from another point of view, the lexicographer often cannot assign a particular New Testament reference to one or another of the acknowledged significations of a word without indicating his exposition of the passage in which the reference occurs. In such a case he is compelled to assume, at least to some extent, the functions of the exegete, although he can and should refrain from rehearsing the general arguments which support the interpretation adopted, as well as from arraying the objections to opposing interpretations.[25]

The lexicographers generally define the word *cup* (ποτήριον, pothrion) as a "drinking vessel." If the lexicographer fails to grasp the context of the author, as Box and Gavin, he or she may fail in giving the correct definition of the word in context. Thayer, as stated above, cautions his readers with these words: "the lexicographer often cannot assign a particular New Testament reference to one or another of the acknowledged significations of a word without indicating his exposition of the passage in which the reference occurs." An answer to the dilemma that one faces in trying to arrive at a correct definition is not etymology (word origins or growth of vocabulary). In other words, the growth of vocabulary is not adequate to discover its precise meaning in any given context. Two factors help in determining the meaning of a particular word: (1) context, and (2) historical

background surrounding the word. As one seeks to understand the context, one must be conscious that an authentic interpretation is one that relates matters of fact as they really happened. David Allen Black says, "It is important to remember that Greek words (like English ones) have a meaning that is context-determined to a significant degree."[26]

It is in this vein that L. Berkhof writes: A word is never fully understood until it is apprehended as a living word, i.e., as it originated in the soul of the author."[27] It is not uncommon for interpreters to interpret the words of Scripture with twenty-first century eyeglasses. In other words, many Christians transfer the authors of the first century to the twenty-first century, and then interpret words with modern day understanding. Berkhof is correct when he writes:

Moreover, he will have to transfer himself mentally into the first century A.D., and into oriental conditions. He must place himself on the standpoint of the author, and seek to enter into his very soul, until he, as it were, lives his life and thinks his thoughts. This means that he will have to guard carefully against the rather common mistake of transferring the author to the present day and making him speak the language of the twentieth century. If he does not avoid this, the danger exists, as McPheerter expresses it, that "the voice he hears (will) be merely the echo of his own ideas" *Bible Student*, Vol. III, No. II.[28]

The admonition of Thayer and the counsel of Berkhof should be applied in one's study of the Eucharistic words of Jesus, especially among Christians who are divided over the use of the number of drinking vessels in the observance of the Lord's Supper. This author (Dallas Burdette) still has relatives of the one-cup persuasion that refuse fellowship with him. Debates are still conducted over the use of multiple cups in the distribution of the fruit of the vine. The Lord's Supper represents unity, not division. The Body of Christ is fractured into warring factions over the Last Supper. The Christian community is alienated into militaristic splinter group over the use of individual cups in the Lord's Supper. Before examining other Lexicographers concerning the meaning of the word *cup* in the Synoptic accounts and the Pauline account, a note is in order concerning division within the so-called restoration movement of the Churches of Christ.

UNITY OR DIVISION

One Cup

Unfortunately, the Lord's Supper has been the cause of division and death down through the centuries, a Meal designed by God to unite His people. Within the Churches of Christ, there is a division, as stated above, over the use of multiple cups versus the use of one common cup for the distribution of the fruit of the vine. Many, not all, one-cup congregations refuse fellowship with those who use individual cups in the Lord's Supper. The Churches of Christ also divided over the use of wine versus grape juice. Other congregations within the one-cup movement also divided over whether to break the bread or pinch the bread (that is to say, the bread must remain one whole).

These divisions should never have happened. The one-cup divisions resulted from certain Christians' failure to look at the Eucharistic sayings in light of each writer of the New Testament. Since this Supper occurred within the context of a Passover meal, one must seek to understand the rituals observed during the time of Christ in order to interpret

correctly the Eucharistic sayings in the Synoptics and Pauline writings. In spite of what some advance in the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship, there is nothing in the Lord's Supper sayings in Matthew, Mark, Luke, nor Paul that teaches that Jesus employed one cup (container) from which all drank. The people in that day did not all drink from the same container during a meal anymore that individuals drink from the same glass or cup during a meal today. The traditional interpretation among the one-cup Christians is a forced interpretation of the text—in spite of their sincerity. This essay will briefly analyze some of the texts in order to bring, hopefully, unity among God's people.

Communion Table: Center or East End of Church?

Before analyzing the various texts dealing with the Lord's Supper, another controversy is worthy of note to illustrate how Christians have used the Lord's Supper to create division, not unity—unity for which Jesus prayed and which the Lord's Supper conveys. Debate over the Communion has plagued God's people down through the ages. For instance, a case in point occurred during the reign of Charles I (1625-1649). William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury (1573-1645) sought to enforce cannon law upon the Puritan churches.[29] One of the grievances that the Established Church had against the Puritans was over the location of the communion table. The Puritans wanted it in the middle of the church building, but the Established Church wanted it in the east end of the house of worship.[30] Even though the English people had endured the tyranny of the king, nevertheless, the Scotch Covenanters had rebelled. When the soldiers of Charles I invaded Scotland, their sympathies lay with the Scots. They broke into the churches and moved the communion tables into the middle of the building.[31] Christians, so it seems, have forgotten the central purpose of the Lord's Supper, as explained above. Emil Brunner, too, explains the sad situation, as early as 1936, in his remarks about the Sacraments:

> The sacrament which was to have united Christians has become an apple of discord, rending Christendom up to the present day, and even setting by the ears our own reformers Luther and Zwingli. Hence it becomes necessary for us to ponder anew the meaning of that mysterious rite of the Church, which from ancient times has been described as a sacrament.[32]

Differences in the Accounts

An examination of the Synoptic accounts and the Pauline account should help many Christians within the one-cup movement to come to a better understanding of what the communion is all about. Just a casual glance at the four accounts—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul—reveals that they all differ in some aspects. Neither Matthew nor Mark employ the phrase "after supper" (μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι, meta to deipnhsai [**1 Corinthians 11:25; Luke 22:20**), a phrase employed by Luke and Paul. This phrase is used to indicate that participation in this cup did not occur until after the Passover meal itself. In Matthew and Mark there is no separation between the bread and cup, but, on the other hand, this eating of the bread and the drinking of the third cup in the Passover is separated by the meal proper, which both Luke and Paul attest. None of the writers of the New Testament give a verbatim record of every detail concerning the observance of the Passover meal, a meal in which Jesus instituted His supper. Listen to Higgins as he explains:

2. In the accounts no mention is made of the paschal lamb and the bitter herbs.

> The narratives, however, even the most primitive in form, that of Mark, are to be regarded not as verbatim records of every detail of the gathering in the upper room, but primarily as cultic formulae which reflect the liturgical practice of the early Church. That is why emphasis is laid on the bread and wine and the words spoken about them by Jesus, to the exclusion of other details which were of the first importance in any Passover meal, but had no place at all in the Church's Eucharist.[33]

Of the four writers, Paul is the only one who gives the name of the cup after supper—"The cup of blessing" (**10:16**). This is significant since the third cup used during the Passover is called "The Cup of Blessing." The confusion, among many Christians is the use of the singular word *cup*. This word *cup* is then interpreted as having reference to a literal container in the Lord's Supper. Another item that grabs one's attention is the cup sayings in Matthew/Mark versus Luke/Paul. The following chart illustrates the differences:

Matthew 26:28	**Luke 22:20**
This is my blood of the[b] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.	"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.
Mark 14:24	**1 Corinthians 11:25**
"This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many."	"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Whether one reads "This is my blood of the covenant" or "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," both statements mean one and the same thing. "Blood" and "cup" are synonymous. Should the word *cup* be interpreted literally or figuratively? Did the four accounts use the word *cup* in a literal sense? In spite of Thayer's comments concerning the meaning of *cup* in the Eucharistic sayings, there are other scholars—equal in scholarship—who give another meaning—a figurative meaning. For instance, Leonhard Goppelt defines the word *cup* (ποτήριον, pothrion) as:

> Contents: 1. The Usage. 2. The Cup in the literal Sense (Mt.23:25 f. par. Lk. 11:39 f.). 3. The figurative Use: a. The Cup of Wrath; b. The Cup of Suffering. 4. The Cup at the Lord's Supper: a. The Cup in the Eschatological Saying Lk. 22:17 f.; b. The Cup of the Interpretative Saying; c. The Cup of the Lord and the Cup of Demons (1 C.10).[34]

He does not include the "cup" in the Synoptic sayings as literal. Hermann Patsch also calls attention to the literal use of the word *cup* in the New Testament writings versus its figurative use. He does not place the literal meaning on the word *cup* in his essay on ποτήριον (pothrion):

> The subst. ποτήριον, which corresponds with Heb. Kos, occurs 31 times in the NT, in the literal sense only in Mark 7:4; 9:41 par. Matthew 10.42; Matt 23:25f. par. Luke 11:39. Otherwise it is metaphorical (Gospels, Revelation) or used as a metonym (the eucharist tradition in the Synoptics and Paul). Only Rev 17:4 mentions the material of a drinking vessel; nowhere does its form (see BRL 181, illustration 43) play a role.[35]

Following these comments about the Greek word ποτήριον, he then gives additional comments about the two cups in Luke. He assigns the first cup as The Cup of Consecration, which he refers to as the *kiddush* over which the Seder is introduced with a benediction, and the third cup as the consecrated cup. In my judgment, he mistakenly identifies the first cup mentioned by Luke. If one follows the sequence of Luke, one assumes that the first cup mentioned by Luke is the second cup (The Cup of Proclamation, not The Cup of Consecration) and the third cup is The Cup of Blessing. In spite of this confusion, his comments are still worth citing:

> 3. If, as is probable, one can assume a Passover framework for Jesus' words at the Last Supper, then the cup in Luke 22:17 is the first (*kiddush*) cup over which the Seder is introduced with a benediction (*m P#s^j. 10:2),* the cup of the "interpretation" is the third cup (*m P#s^j. 10:7),* the consecrated cup" (Heb. Kos v#l B#r*k&, b. B#r 51a; *Jos. As*. 8:9 [11]: ποτήριον εὐλογίας) after the main meal, over which Jesus gives thanks (Mark 14:23 par. Luke 22:10a/Matt 26:27/1 Cor 11:25a; cf 10:16)—εὐλογέω 3. In the interpretation (made explicit in Luke 22:20b par. 1 Cor 11:25b) the vessel is always a metonym for its contents, the wine.[36]

One observes a great deal of confusion on the part of scholars as they seek to disclose the interpretation of the Eucharist, which is self-evident as one reads after the scholars. Sometimes, one comes away with the idea that Jesus handed His disciples a literal cup and that they all drank from the same cup. Goppelt recognizes that each person present at the Passover had his own cup: "They are all to drink of this cup, or, less probably, to fill their own cups from it. The common drinking united the disciples in table fellowship under the saying uttered with this cup."[37] The expression "this cup" does not refer to one literal container for the whole group, but rather to the 'formal drinking" of the third cup, which is called "The Cup of Blessing." "This cup" is equivalent to the third filling of their individual cups. Four different times during the Passover, they filled their cups. Each filling was referred to by a particular name—(1) The Cup of Consecration, (2) The Cup of Proclamation, (3) The Cup of Blessing, and (4) The Cup of Hallel. Even though each person had his own cup, this drinking still represented the disciples in united table fellowship. Whether one drinks from the same container or from his own individual cup, one still participates in table fellowship—a fellowship that commemorates the death of Jesus until He comes again.

One observes differences between Matthew/Mark and Paul/Luke, as illustrated in the chart above. For example, Paul and Luke begin with τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματι, touto to pothrion Jh kainh diaqhkh en tw Jamati, ("This cup is the new testament in my blood," [**1 Corinthians 11:25** and **Luke 22:20**]). On the other hand, Matthew and Mark begin with τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης, touto gar estin to Jaima mou ths diaqhkhs ("For this is my blood of the covenant" [**Matthew 26:28** and

Mark 14:24]). Goppelt writes: "Whether the interpretation begins with τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον (Paul, Lk.) or with τοῦτο (Mk., Mt.), it refers, not to the cup, but to its contents, (red) wine. Nevertheless, the second element in the Lord's Supper is almost always called the cup rather than the wine in the NT."[38] Again, he pens: "In Lk. 22:20b 1 C. 11:25b the cup is used metonym. For what it contains."[39] Whether one says, "This is my blood" or "this cup," one is saying the same thing. The emphasis is upon the red wine as representative of the new covenant, not a literal drinking vessel representative of the covenant.

The word *covenant* is a word that is frequently misapplied by many Christians. This author (Dallas Burdette) grew up in the one-cup movement in which the "covenant," or "new testament" was identified as twenty-seven books called the "New Testament." This identification was and is a misunderstanding of the Greek word διαθήκη (diaqhkh), which is equivalent to the Hebrew בְּרִית (B=r!,,T), which also means "covenant." William Barclay defines a covenant as: "A Covenant is a relationship of friendship into which two people enter, with mutual pledges of fidelity. In the New Testament the covenant is the relationship between God and his people."[40] Mark, author of the Gospel of Mark, employs a phrase that is difficult for some to understand—"blood of the covenant" (αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης, Jaima mou ths diaqhkhs) [Mark 14:25].

The confusion results from the phraseology—noun in the genitive case. The Greeks often used the genitive of a noun instead of an adjective. In English, one is more likely to say, "This is my covenant blood," rather than "This is my blood of the covenant." By changing this phrase to "covenant blood," then the word *Covenant* is employed as an adjective, not as a noun in the genitive (a noun in the genitive expresses possession[41]). Not only is the "blood" representative of the covenant, but, at the same time, the blood of Christ also seals this new relationship between God and humanity—a relationship based, not on works, but on the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. This view is the very opposite of the one-cup movement that maintains that the literal cup represents the new covenant and the blood seals the new covenant—two distinct emblems. An example of the literal cup representing the New Testament is found in the writings of E. H. Miller (1909-1989), one of the most outstanding defenders of the one-cup and nonSunday school movement; he puts it this way:

> "He (Jesus) said, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood,' meaning, the new covenant is sealed, ratified, or sanctioned by His blood."

Here, you see the cup is not the blood that **"the new covenant (new testament) is sealed, ratified, or sanctioned by".** No! this shows "this cup is the new covenant (New Testament 'sealed, ratified, or sanctioned') in my blood." Yes, the cup represents the New covenant or New Testament that was sealed, ratified, or sanctioned in or by Christ's blood, and the fruit of the vine represents the blood of Christ which the New Covenant or New Testament was sealed, ratified, or sanctioned in, or by.[42]

Miller writes about three emblems in the Lord's Supper: (1) Bread, (2) Cup [literal container], and (3) Fruit of the vine [grape juice]. He fails, in my judgment, to understand the phrase "blood of the covenant" or the phrase "in my blood." What does "in my blood" mean? William Barclay explains the words this way:

> What is the meaning of the phrase *in my blood?* The Hebrew word B= (the + is

> pronounced as in *the*) means *at the price of*, and it is frequently translated by the Greek word en, the word which is used here in the phrase usually translated in my blood; and it is true that the basic meaning of en is in. David demands Michal to wife, for he has betrothed her at the price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines. *At the price of* is in Hebrew B=, and in the Greek of the Septuagint en. I would suggest that the en in the phrase *in my blood* means *at the price of my blood*." The covenant blood is the blood which makes the covenant possible, the price of the relationship.[43]

The red wine represents the covenant and, at the same time, the red wine represents the blood of the covenant, which blood seals the covenant. As one seeks to understand the Eucharistic sayings, one can only gain a true understanding of the richness of that whole when one allows the parts of the various accounts to speak for themselves. One cannot impose a meaning it will not bear. One must never go to the Bible looking for what will superficially meet one's interpretation. An honest assessment of the detailed evidence, as found in all the Eucharistic texts, reveals a different conclusion from the one-cup movement. One must accept the full relevance of the historical details as found in the Scriptures, not isolated texts from its context. One can learn from the patient study of trained scholars. It is in this regard that Johannes Behm is called forth to give testimony to help clarify the confusion on the part of many sincere believers. Behm correctly observed:

> The most important Synoptic passage is the saying of Jesus in relation to the cup at the institution of the Lord's Supper, Mk. 14:24": τουτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν (Ma. 26:28: …τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχ. εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν) and 1 C. 11:25 in a traditional form: τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστιν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι (on which is based Lk. 22:20 -- ἐστιν, + τὸ ὑπερ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον). Whatever Aramaic expression Jesus used, if He spoke of the διαθήκη of the last days on the basis of Jer. 31:31 ff., then according to Mk. He described the red wine in the cup as His blood of the διαθήκη (αἷμα I, 174). Or according to the Pauline tradition He described the cup (ποτήριον), i.e., its contents, as the new διαθήκη in virtue of His blood. Age, independence and difficulty suggest that the Pauline form is the older. Mk. has assimilated the saying to that concerning the bread and to Ex. 24:8: ἰδοὺ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης. The saying in the Pauline form is to the effect that the blood (or death) of Jesus establishes the new διαθήκη, and that the wine in the Lord's Supper is thus a representation of the new διαθήκη. Since Jeremiah (with Dt. Is.) was for Jesus the most familiar of all the prophets, we are undoubtedly to relate His saying concerning the new διαθήκη to Jer. 31:31 ff., whose counterpart, the διαθήκη at Sinai after the Exodus was constituted by blood.[44]

Whether one says, "This is my blood of the covenant" (**Matthew 26:25; Mark 14:24**) or "This cup is the new covenant" (**Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25**), one is saying the same thing. The blood of Christ represents the covenant, and, at the same time, it is the blood of Christ that ratifies, or guarantees, the actualization of the new divine order, that is to say, the new covenant, or new relationship between God and humanity. The violet death of Christ establishes the new divine order promised in **Jeremiah 31:31** ff. The use of one literal container in the distribution of the red wine or a plurality of cups to distribute the red wine does not destroy the imagery or symbolism.

The meal is a reminder of the historical fact of the death, burial, and resurrection of

Jesus. Both the bread and wine are symbols of redemption. In the observance of the Lord's Supper, this external rite impresses upon the senses of God's people the wonder of it all, that is to say, salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the Tree. When Christians assemble to partake of the Table of the Lord, this activity is horizontal in nature, that is, it binds the people of God together. There is a sense in which Christians pledge their loyalty to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father. God frames the new covenant with His own blood. The cup, or red wine, stands for the covenant and, simultaneously, actualizes this new union, or agreement.

A. J. B. Higgins, too, correctly points out that the blood of Christ is representative of two things. Listen as he captures this line of reasoning: "The cup is the sign and pledge of a share in the new covenant."[45] What is the "cup"? Once more Higgins writes: "The blood or death of Jesus founds the new covenant, and so the wine represents the new covenant, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31 ff."[46] Just a perusal of the Eucharistic accounts reveal that the real meaning of the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of the death of Christ upon the Cross. Scott McCormick's assessment of the "new covenant" is full of insight:

> So the hope for a Suffering Servant, again like all Old Testament hope which was projected into the end-time, constituted a hope for a "new" covenant, a fully new and right relationship between God and his people. That would be *his* doing, same as the announcement itself was his. All of it rested on his initiative and the eternal sureness of his purpose in calling Israel in the first place.[47]

I. Howard Marshall, too, calls attention to the diversity in the Matthew/Mark and Luke/Paul accounts. His comments about the meaning of the word *cup* in Paul is worth citing, especially for its clarity concerning the significance of blood and covenant:

> The saying over the cup takes the form 'This is my blood of the covenant' in Mark; this wording appears to echo Exodus 24:8, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you.' In Luke and Paul, however, we have the form 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood'. Here 'This' is identified explicitly as the cup, and the cup (or its contents) typifies not the blood which inaugurates the covenant but the covenant which is inaugurated by the blood; the addition of the word 'new' produces an allusion to Jeremiah 31:31.[48]

William Barclay (1907-1978) proposes two questions in seeking to understand the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He asks: "What does it mean to say that the bread is his body and the cup is his blood?"[49] Back in 1970, this author visited E. H. Miller (his uncle) to share with him some of the things in Barclay's book on the Lord's Supper. One of the items concerned Barclay's translation of the Short Text of the Sinaitic Syriac in Luke 22:20b: "This my blood is the new covenant, which is being poured out for you."[50] Miller (1909-1989)[51] affirmed that no Greek manuscript gives such a rendering. He also declared that Barclay was wrong. At the time, I had no way of proving Barclay's translation correct, other than I relied upon his scholarship and integrity as a Christian. Sometime later (1973), I purchased a book by Bruce M. Metzger in which he gives the Greek text of this Sinaitic Syriac manuscript. The following is a chart of the Nestle Greek text and the Sinaitic Syriac text:

	Sinaitic Syriac

The Nestle Greek Text	
Luke 22:20b	**Luke 22:20b**
Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."	Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμα μου ἡ διαθήκη ἡ καινή.[52] "This is my blood the new covenant."

From this chart one observes that the Sinaitic Syriac has "blood" rather than "cup" as representative of the new covenant. Once more, the words of I. Howard Marshal are informative: "For Lk. the cup, i.e. its contents (L. Goppelt, TDNT VI, 155, n. 70), symbolizes the new covenant, in the sense that the new covenant is brought into being by what it signifies, namely, the sacrificial death of Jesus."[53] In this same vein, Vincent Taylor writes: "Of this life the wine is both the symbol and the means by which it is appropriated, in harmony with the words of Ex. xxiv. 11."[54]

Again, his words are to the point: "The 'covenant' is that relationship of lordship and obedience which God establishes between Himself and men, and 'the blood of the covenant' is the sign of its existence and the means by which it is effected."[55] Once more, Vincent is justified in his remarks concerning Paul's phrase (τοῦτο τό ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστιν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι) as meaning the "content of the Cup."[56] Again, he rightly observes: "Mark and Matthew, as much as Paul and Luke, compare the wine with the blood by the shedding of which the New Covenant is established."[57] Leonhard Goppelt comments are worthy of citation:

> Whether the interpretation begins with τοῦτο τό ποτήριον (Paul. LK.) or with τοῦτο alone (Mk., Mt.), it refers, not to the cup, but to its contents, (red) wine. Nevertheless, the second element in the Lord's Supper is almost always called the cup rather than the wine in the NT.[58]

COMMON CUP OR INDIVIDUAL CUPS IN THE PASSOVER?

Many Christians make a difference between the cup and its contents, but this view is untenable from the context of each of the Synoptic writers or Paul. The scholars do not agree concerning the use of the common cup or cups. Basically, this confusion is over the identification of the time of the institution of the Last Supper. Did this meal occur during the Passover or a Kiddush meal? In the Kiddush meal, a common cup was used, but in the Passover, individual cups were employed in the four formal drinkings. Some scholars argue that since the Gospels indicate that Jesus used a "common cup" (single), therefore, this meal could not have occurred during the Passover.[59]

The scholars that this author (Dallas Burdette) has studied appear confused as to the true nature of the Passover and the Gospel accounts of the event as it transpired on the eve of the Passover. For example, some scholars argue that since individual cups were employed, then, this could not have been the Passover.[60] Joachim Jeremias calls attention to G. H. Box who denied that the Lord's Supper occurred during the Passover:

> On the other hand, it is claimed that by the time of Jesus *individual cups were used* at the Passover meal; since, according to Mark 14.23 par., all the people present at the Last Supper drank from the same cup, supposedly this is evidence for the fact that the Last Supper could not have been a Passover

> meal. Finally, it is explained that each participant in the Passover meal was supposed to have *his own dish* before him,, and this stands in contrast to the eating from the common dish presupposed by Mark 14.20.[61]

Box, like so many other scholars, failed to understand the language of the Synoptic Gospels concerning the "cup sayings." This misunderstanding will be dealt with in detail later in this essay. As a result of the nature of the language in the Gospels, many scholars are unsure as to whether a common cup or multiple cups were utilized. As a result of this confusion, Vincent Taylor writes about this uncertainty of individual cups or one common cup in the Passover: "But the evidence for the Passover usage in respect of cups in the first century . . . is too uncertain to sustain an argument either way.[62] Jeremias also reasons that there is room for doubt as to whether Jesus used the common cup or individual cups. He writes:

> As regards the Passover meal in particular, the words of Pes. 10:2: 'the first cup has been mixed for him' – for the *paterfamilias?* [*Beer, Pesachim*, 190] for each quest? [*Billerbeck IV*, 59, 61; Strack, *Pesahim*, 32; E. Baneth in *Mischnaioth II*, 238n. 8; 239n. 11.] leave room for some doubt whether the common or individual cup is meant, although the context favours the former. [63]

Again, one witnesses another reputable scholar who straddles the fence concerning the actual practice of the Passover in the time of Christ and cannot determine whether Christ used one common cup or individual cups. The confusion over whether Jesus used a "single cup" or "individual cups" is as a result of not discerning the language employed in the Passover. Whenever one reads the language of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul, one must read the various texts as the *implied readers* read the texts. This essay seeks to set forth from Jewish sources the meaning and interpretation of the controversial texts.

For example, "The Cup of Blessing" that Paul alludes to in **1 Corinthians 10:16** has to do with the name attached to the third cup utilized in the Passover—called The Cup of Blessing. The filling of their cups after the meal proper (after supper) is called among the Jews The Cup of Blessing. On four different occasions during the Passover, they filled their cups; each filling was referred to with a particular name—(1) The Cup of Consecration, (2) The Cup of Proclamation, (3) The Cup of Blessing, and (4) The Cup of Hallel. In others words, there were four ritualistic formal drinkings. Did Jesus institute His Supper during the Passover? The Synoptic writers agree that the celebration took place during this meal. The following Scripture citations sets forth this belief:

Book of Matthew

> 17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. 20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. (**Matthew 26:17-20**)

Book of Mark

12 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to
sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us
to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he sent two of
his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water
will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The
Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my
disciples?' 15 He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make
preparations for us there." 16 The disciples left, went into the city and found
things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. 17 When
evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at
the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one
who is eating with me." (**Mark 14:12-18**)

Book of Luke

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to
be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations
for us to eat the Passover." 9 "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they
asked. 10 He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will
meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, 11 and say to the owner of the
house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the
Passover with my disciples?' 12 He will show you a large upper room, all
furnished. Make preparations there." 13 They left and found things just as Jesus
had told them. So they prepared the Passover. 14 When the hour came, Jesus and
his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired
to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it
again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." (**Luke 22:7-17**)

This internal evidence from Matthew, Mark, and Luke states clearly that the Last Supper occurred during the time of this Jewish festivity. It is also significant that the practice of "reclining" rather that sitting was the practice during the Passover in the time of Christ. During this period of their festivities, the Jews used four ritual cups of wine, or four formal drinkings, as mentioned above. Wine also was used in the Passover, and the breaking of the bread into pieces was also the practice. In addition to these customs, the Jews also introduced the singing of psalms into this festivity—**Psalms 113-118**. The practice of reclining is mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Gustaf Dalman's comments concerning the practice of reclining in the first century is revealing:

> According to Mk. xiv. 15; Lk. xxii. 12, the room given for the Passover meal would be 'furnished and ready' (ἐστρωμένον) for the purpose. In fact, not every room could be used for it. Although it is commanded in the Law (Exod. xii.11) that the Israelites should eat the Passover with girdled garment, staves in hands and sandals on feet (i.e. prepared to start in haste on a long journey), this referred to 'that time' only, i.e. to the time of the Exodus, but not to 'all generations'. The Jews differ in this from the Samaritans, who even now swallow down the Passover lamb in great haste, as if preparing for a sudden journey; but the former consider it essential that the eating of the Passover

should have the real character of a festive meal, in which free men, not slaves, take part. The slave eats standing; the Israelite, reclining at the Passover meal, demonstrates that his people had attained freedom from Egyptian bondage. This, even the poorest Jew is obliged to show forth; he partakes of the meal to this day neither standing nor sitting, but reclining.[64]

The one-cup and nonSunday school churches of Christ also separated over the manner of breaking the bread in the Lord's Supper. Some of these Christians became known as bread pinchers while others were known as bread breakers. If the bread pinchers had studied the historical background to the Passover, they would have discovered that the bread was broken into pieces and passed around by the host. I. Howard Marshall writes:

At an ordinary Jewish meal, as distinct from the sacrificial meals which have just been discussed, the religious aspect was expressed by the giving of thanks to God at both the beginning and the end. The commencement of the meal was marked by the head of the household taking a piece of bread in his hands and saying a prayer of thanks over it: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who bringest forth bread from the earth'. The bread was then broken into pieces and shared among all those present. It has been suggested that 'in this way every participant in the meal received a share of the benediction', but this seems to be a mistaken notion since the prayer was not a way of blessing the bread so that it might become a vehicle of blessing to other people but rather an act of blessing, i.e. of thanking, God for his goodness in providing it. There was probably no special significance in the breaking and distribution of the bread; it was simply the ordinary way of dividing up a loaf so that each person present might have a share. Similarly, at the end of the meal the host took a cup of wine, known as 'the cup of bless', and gave thanks to God for it, after which all present drank.[65]

Jeremias also corroborates Marshall's testimony with the following comments:

It was J. Lightfoot, as far as I can see, who first mistook this initial dividing (Maimonides uses jlk "to divide', not Prs 'to split') before the blessing for the 'breaking of bread' after the blessing, and other have followed him in this mistake right down to the present. The truth is that at the Passover, as at every other meal, the blessing was said first, and then the unleavened bread was broken and the fragments distributed. The sequence 'blessing—breaking of the bread' (Mark 14.22 par. 'having blessed he broke') is therefore in full accord with the Passover ritual.[66]

I. Howard Marshall lists a number of rules practiced in the religious aspects of Jewish meals. In this discussion, cited above, he, too, like Jeremias, calls attention to the practice of breaking the bread into pieces. When Matthew writes: "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body" (**Matthew 26:26**). In other words, Jesus took bread and broke into pieces. Even though the bread was fragmented into pieces, Jesus could still speak of the fragmented pieces as His body. Paul, too, speaks of the body of Christ as consisting of many member, but at the same time, he still refers to the many as "one body" (**1 Corinthians 10:17**). G. H. Box writes: "**and he brake it.** The broken bread is a

symbolical reference to the Passion; 'this [broken bread] is My Body'."[67]

Barclay also calls attention to the practice of breaking the bread during the Passover:

> 9. First, grace was said, and small pieces of the unleavened bread were distributed to the company. The Passover grace is: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who bringest forth fruit from the earth. Blessed art thou who hast sanctified us with thy commandment, and enjoined us to eat unleavened cakes."[68]

Marshall, author of Commentary on Luke in Eerdman's New International Greek Testament Commentary series, writes, as cited above, "The bread was then broken into pieces and shared among all those present.[69] When one fails to understand the practice in the Passover in the time of Jesus, one frequently misunderstands the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper. The breaking of bread is a classic example among many within the Churches of Christ. Box, as cited above, is another example of failure to read the Synoptic accounts in light of the Passover in the time of Christ.

Another comment by Slater and Box illustrates their failure to interpret the Eucharistic sayings correctly: "**he took a cup.** The distribution of a common cup is not a feature of the Passover (where each man has his own cup). It may have been suggested by the weekly ceremony of the *kiddush* in which a common cup was employed."[70] These two authors are confused over the language of the Synoptics. Both denied the Last Supper occurred during the Passover since in the Passover each person had his or her own cup. In their reading of the Synoptic accounts, both men failed to read in light of the *implied reader*. He interprets "the cup" as a common cup, not the name assigned to a formal drinking—The Cup of Blessing. The Lord's Supper is not about one common cup or multiple cups. One cup or multiple cups does not take away from the real meaning of the Eucharist—commemoration of the death of Christ, that is, His atoning death.[71]

The picture of the Last Supper comes into sharper focus when the Synoptic accounts and Paul are compared with the ancient order of the Passover service. The *implied readers*, the original recipients of the Gospels and Pauline writings, understood the Jewish Passover with all its traditions. Just a casual glance at the New Testament writers reveal that the authors did not describe all that happened during their festive meal. It is self-evident that the authors did not intend to give the *ipsissima verba* of the Eucharistic sayings of Jesus, that is to say, the actual words in full. Higgins submits that

> In the accounts no mention is made of the paschal lamb and the bitter herbs. The narratives, however, even the most primitive in form, that of Mark, are to be regarded not as verbatim records of every detail of the gathering in the upper room, but primarily as cultic formulae which reflect the liturgical practice of the early Church. That is why emphasis is laid on the bread and wine and the words spoken about them by Jesus, the exclusion of other details which were of the first importance in any Pasover meal, but had no place at all in the Church's Eucharist.[72]

The authors of the New Testament writings do not give a detailed description *of* the Last Supper, but rather they give a brief account of the Eucharist as it began to be celebrated after the Resurrection. W. D. Davies rightly points out that the various

accounts do not record the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus' words. He writes firmly: "Similarly we are not to understand from Paul's account of the Last Supper that he is quoting the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, but we are to find there the precipitate of those words percolated through the mind of a Rabbi."[73] D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge also write:

> Pedantic precision and verbatim quotation do not seem to be their goals. Yet those same changes warn us against facile accusations that the writers are introducing errors of fact or substance. Just as a modern writer might condense a lengthy discussion and tell of it in his own idiom and in a fraction of the total number of words actually spoken, without being charged with lies, inventiveness, distortion, or deceit, so the Gospel writers must be allowed the same freedom. This is the nature of reportage, even reportage designed to make theological and historical points.[74]

It is evident that the authors of the Gospels do not allege to give word for word quotes from Jesus or the events that transpired on the night of the Passover, but rather they summarize and use their own language to provide an accurate impression of the historical substance of the surroundings on that eventful evening. Since the disciples did not supply complete details practiced in the Passover in the time of Christ, one must go to outside sources to fill in the gaps in the Synoptic accounts and the Pauline account. One such source is the *Mishna.*[75] The Mishna, compiled between AD 100 and 210, covers every aspect of Jewish life and presents a picture of the custom, traditions, and observances at the time of Christ.[76] Jeremias cautions individuals in the use of the Mishnah in establishing the use of individual cups in the time of Jesus. Even though Jeremias has reservations about the Mishna, which is one part of the Talmud, one should be conscious that the Talmud[77] is also a written code of the traditions that existed 200 years before Christ.[78] Jeremias writes with advice and caution about the overall use of the *Mishna*:

> As regards the Passover meal in particular, the words of Pes. 10.2, 4, 7 (10.2: 'the first cup has been mixed for him'—for the paterfamilias for each guest?) leave room for some doubt whether the common or individual cup is meant, although the context favours the former. However, even if the Mishnah should presuppose the individual cup, its testimony would scarcely be valid for Jesus' time. For the Mishnah describes the celebration of the Passover as it was held after AD 70, when it was no longer celebrated by the whole nation in Jerusalem but by individual families in the places where they lived. More significance is to be attached to the fact that *b. Pes*. 108b reports that is some cases the paterfamilias invited his children and other members of the family to drink from his cup; this could be the survival of an earlier custom.[79]

Even though the Mishnah was assembled after AD 100, this fact does not mean that the information contained in this work does not represent the practices in the first century or before. The above paragraph my Jeremias reveals that he misunderstood the phrase "The Cup of Blessing." He identifies the terminology as having reference to the "common cup," or one cup (singular) from which the participants drank. He failed to look through the eyes of the authors of the first century. Four different times during the Passover ceremony, the Jews filled their cups. Each ritualistic filling, or formal drinking, received a different name. "The Cup of Blessing," for instance, referred to the third formal drinking

following the eating of the Passover lamb. As stated above, each filling received a specific name, or title, to celebrate, or represent, a different aspect of the Exodus from Egypt—The Cup of Consecration, The Cup of Proclamation, The Cup of Blessing, and The Cup of Hallel.

Jeremias, so it seems, is confused as to the number of containers used in the Passover. Higgins, too, wavered in his views concerning the use of cups or a common cup during the Passover observed by Christ.[80] The confusion stems from a wooden literalness of the various accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul. In other words, both of these scholars, as well as many others, read the accounts with twentieth-century bifocals rather than first-century bifocals. Jeremias' treatment of the common cup cannot be regarded as satisfactory in light of the language surrounding the phrase "The Cup of Blessing." He jumped to an unsatisfactory position in regard to the common cup:

> It must therefore be regarded as most probable that the earlier custom was to share one common cup at the Passover meal, at least in the case of the cup of blessing, the third of the four Passover cups, and that Mark 14:23 therefore reflects the situation of a Passover meal at the time of Jesus.[81]

One cannot place an inordinate amount of weight on his argument against individual cups. A major objection to his methodology is the subjectivity that he displays in seeking to maintain that Jesus and His apostles all drank from a common cup. One should keep in mind that the Passover was a feast; people no more drank after one another in their meals than people do today. The following citation shows the subjectivity in his thinking and writing:

> For the time of Jesus, however, a simple technical consideration seems to me to be decisive: were there enough eating utensils in that overcrowded holy city for each one of the pilgrims who filled its houses, courtyards and roof-tops in tens of thousands for the Passover celebration to have his own cup? Anyone who knows something of oriental households will certainly have to answer in the negative.[82]

As far as we know, Jesus, along with the Twelve, participated in the Passover—thirteen in all. Mark calls attention to the preparation required before Jesus met with His disciples to eat the meal. Jesus says, "He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready, Make preparations for us there" (**Mark 14:15**).

INNOVATIONS IN THE PASSOVER
Reclining on Dining Couches

Before analyzing the Greek text of the various accounts to demonstrate that the word *cup*, as utilized in the Gospel accounts, is figurative and refers to the blood, a detour is in order. This alternative route surrounds innovations introduced into the Passover in the time of Christ that did not appear in the first Passover. It is significant that Jesus involved Himself, along with His disciples, in actions that were modernistic, or revolutionary, into the Pasover as recorded in the Book of Exodus. Even if Jesus used one common cup, which He did not, does this practice mean that Christians of all ages must drink from one drinking vessel in the observance of the Lord's Supper? Surely not! Since all the Synoptics call attention to the posture of reclining during the Passover, is this still binding

upon His disciples today? Definitely not! In the Passover in Jesus' day, wine was employed during the Passover. Does this forbid unfermented grape juice? Of course not!

Even though there were alterations from the original Passover, these changes were not anti-Scriptural. Something may be *unscriptural* but not *antiscriptural* In other words, Jesus and His apostles violated no principle of commemoration set forth by God in the original Passover. Reclining during the meal and the use of four cups of wine were innovations. Yet, in the time of Christ, this was fashionable. The Passover observed by Jesus included details that were not practiced in the original Passover described by the Torah.[83] Ceil Rosen, a Jew who found Jesus as her Messiah and is a free-lance writer, and Moishe Rosen, her husband, founder and director of Jews for Jesus, writes about the first century observance:

> By the first century, the Passover observance included several new customs in addition to the obligations described in the Torah account. Already, a set form of service called the Seder, meaning "order of service," was in use. The celebrants reclined at the table in the Babylonian custom of free men. (Slaves stood in attendance while their masters ate.) The ceremony included ritual hand washings and set prayers. The celebrants drank four cups of wine as a symbol of joy. Oral tradition contained in the Mishnah commanded that even the poorest person must drink the minimum four cups, even if he had to sell himself to do labor or had to borrow money in order to buy the wine.[84]

In the original Passover (פֶּסַח, P#s^j), wine was not, at least as far as the record reveals, employed. Yet in the time of Christ, wine was a part of the Passover. The practice of reclining rather than sitting during the Pasover is noticed by Nathan Isaacs in an article ("Passover") in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*: "Instead of eating in haste, as in the Egyptian Passover, it is customary to recline at this meal in token of Israel's freedom."[85] Jeremias, too, comments on this ritual during the time of Christ:

> A further point on which the Synoptics (Mark 14.18; Matt. 28.20; Luke 22:14) and John (13:12, 23, 25, 28) agree is that Jesus and his disciples *reclined* at table at the Last Supper. This also is not to be taken as a matter of course! For at the time of Jesus the diners *sat* down (Heb. y^v^B, Aram. y#T#B) as we know from rabbinical sources.[86]

In the original Passover, it appears from the context of Exodus that the individuals stood in the eating of the meal. Jeremias gives the following information in a footnote (# 2):

> J. Pes. 10:37b. 53f.: 'R. Levi (c.300) has said: 'because slaves eat standing, here (at the Passover meal) people should recline to eat, to signify that they have passed from slavery to freedom.' Ex. 12: 11 was regarded as a rule that was valid only for the actual exodus itself.[87]

Luke reports Jesus' requesting His disciples to make ready for the Passover this way:

> As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, [11] and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my

disciples?' [12] He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there. (**Luke 22:1—12**)

The English translation "furnished" is from the Greek word στρώννυμι (strwmnnumi, "to spread"). Jesus is telling them that they will find an upper room in which they will discover carpets with dining couches supplied with cushions. Luke, in this same vein, discloses the following: "When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined (ἀνέπεσεν, anepesen) at the table" (**22:14**). The verb "reclined" is from the Greek word ἀναπίπτω (anapiptw), which means to lie down, recline, especially at a meal. Matthew also registers this practice: "When evening came, Jesus was reclining (ἀνέκειτο, anekeito) at the table with the Twelve" (**Matthew 26:20**). Mark also writes: "While they were reclining (ἀνακειμένων, anakeimenwn) at the table eating, he said, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me'" (**Mark 14:18**). The lengthy words of Gustaf Dalman is informative:

> According to Mk. xiv. 15; Lk. xxii. 12, the room given for the Passover meal would be 'furnished and ready' (ἐστρωμένον, estrwmenon) for the purpose. In fact, not every room could be used for it. Although it is commanded in the Law (Exod. xii. 11) that the Israelites should eat the Passover with girdled garment, staves in hands and sandals on feet (i.e. prepared to start in haste on a long journey), this referred to 'that time' only, i.e. to the time of the Exodus, but not to 'all generations. The Jews differ in this from the Samaritans, who even now swallow down the Passover lamb in great haste, as if preparing for a sudden journey; but the former consider it essential that the eating of the Passover should have the real character of a festive meal, in which free men, not slaves, take part. The slave eats standing; the Israelite, reclining at the Passover meal, demonstrates that his people had attained freedom from Egyptian bondage. This even the poorest Jew is obliged to show forth; he partakes of the meal to this day neither standing nor sitting, but reclining.[88]

Just a perusal of the words reported by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul reveal that the writers left out most of the details concerning the Passover. There was no reason to give all the details since the *implied readers* understood this history. The authors of the Synoptic Gospels give "bits and pieces" of what transpired. For instance, Luke gives more information than any of the other Synoptic authors or Paul. Luke is the only one that mentions two of the four cups in the Passover.

> [7] Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. [8] Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." [9] "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. [10] He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, [11] and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' [12] He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there." [13] They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. [14] When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. [15] And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this

Passover with you before I suffer. [16] For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." [17] After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. [18] For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." [19] And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." [20] In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. (**Luke 22:7-20**)

From Luke's account, it is noticeable that one is not reading *ipsissima verba* of the events that actually transpired in the Last Supper. One also observes that the breaking of bread into pieces occurred between the drinking of two cups. Some scholars refer the first cup to The Cup of Consecration rather than to The Cup of Proclamation (2nd formal drinking—ritualistic cup—in which the story of the Exodus was told). As stated above, the cup after supper was the third cup—The Cup of Blessing. On the other hand, Paul is the only one that mentions the name of the third cup (**1 Corinthians 10:16**). Neither Matthew nor Mark mentions all of the details found in Luke or Paul. Also, one discovers that neither Matthew nor Mark calls attention to the time frame of the drinking of the third cup—the phrase "after supper' is conspicuously absent from both Matthew and Mark.

As one seeks to interpret the bread and wine sayings, this author has placed a parallel account of the Last Supper with the Passover traditions. In the following chart, one will find the paschal context placed alongside of the Synoptic writers as well as Paul's words:

PASSOVER	LAST SUPPER
	Luke 22:14-16 (NIV) [14] When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. [15] And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. [16] For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."
1. *Hors d'oeuver.* The head of the household over the first cup pronounces the blessing for the wine, which is then drunk by him and the others present. The first blessing is the ***kiddush*,** the second would have been in the traditional form, 'Blessed art thou who createst the fruit of the vine,' then are eaten green herbs, bitter herbs, and ***baroseth***, a sauce consisting of fruits, spices, and vinegar into which the bitter herbs	**Luke 22:17-18** (NIV) [17] After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. [18] For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

are dipped.[89]	
2. ***Haggadah.*** When the food (unleavened bread, the roast lamb, wine, bitter herbs, etc.) for the meal proper is brought in, the son in a household asks his father why this night differs from other nights in several respects, particularly in that all the bread is unleavened. The reply is that the Pasover lamb is eaten 'because God passed over the house of our fathers in Egypt' (Ex. 12:26f); bitter herbs 'because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt' (cf. Ex. 1:14). Everyone must regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt (cf. Ex. 13:8).[90]	Jesus description of himself as the true Passover lamb.[91] Paul refers to Christ as our Passover lamb: "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth" (**1 Corinthians 5:7-8**).
3. The singing of the first part of the Hallel (according to the school of Shammai, Ps. 113; according to the school of Hillel, Pss. 113 and 114. [92]	
4. The drinking of a second cup of wine.[93]	
5. The president takes unleavened bread, blesses God in the words, 'Blessed art thou who bringest forth bread from the earth', and breaks it in pieces which he hands to the guest.[94]	**Luke 22:19** (NIV) 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." **Matthew 26:26** (NIV) 26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." **Mark 14:22** (NIV) 22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." **1 Corinthians 11:23** (NIV)

	23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,
6. The meal proper.[95]	
7. At the conclusion the president offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the meal over a third cup, 'the cup of blessing' (cf. 1. Cor. 10:15)[96]	**Luke 22:20** (NIV) 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. **1 Corinthians 11:25** (NIV) 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."
8. The drinking of the fourth cup—the cup of Hallel.[97]	
9. The singing of the second part of the Hallel.[98]	**Matthew 26:30** (NIV) 30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. **Mark 14:26** (NIV) 26 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

In order to discover the importance or meaning of the Passover in the time of Christ as it relates to the Last Supper, it will be helpful to probe more deeply into this

feast. William Barclay's comments concerning the Passover are extremely helpful in understanding the Synoptic accounts as well as the Pauline writings. He makes the following comments:

> It will help if we outline the Pasover ritual, so that we may see if the last meal fits into it. There were six things necessary for the Pasover and which had to be prepared in advance. . . . 1. There was the lamb. . . . 2. There was the unleavened bread. . . . 3. There was a bowl of salt water. . . .4. There was a collection of bitter herbs, such as horseradish, chicory, endive, lettuce, horehound. . . . 5. There was a paste called *charosheth*. It was made of apples, dates, pomegranates, and nuts, and through it ran sticks of cinnamon. . . . 6. Lastly . . . there were four cups of wine.[99]

The above list is a condensed version of his elaborate detailed account of the Passover in the time of Christ. One perceives, at least from his account, that when Jesus instituted His Supper, there were four cups of wine used at the time of the Passover in the first century. When the Jews spoke of four cups of wine, they did not have reference to four literal containers, but rather to four formal drinkings in which each person filled their cups four different times. Each time the Twelve filled their cups, one also notices that each filling was referred to in the singular by a particular name. Once more, the explanation of the four cups by Barclay is instructive, especially for clarity as to the practice:

1. It began with the first cup, the cup of Kiddush, or the consecration. . . . The cup was accompanied with a prayer, thanking God for this memorial of redemption, and for taking Israel to himself as his own people.
2. The second cup is drunk. It is called the cup of the proclaiming, because it followed the proclaiming of the hand of God in Israel's history.
3. After the thanksgiving prayer, the third cup, which was called the cup of thanksgiving, was drunk, with this prayer.
4. The cup was filled for the fourth and last time. The second part of the Hallel, Psalms 115-118, was sung, and then the Great Hallel, Psalm 136. [100]

In the Pasover, in the time of Christ, it was necessary that the participants fill their cups with wine four different times during this meal. Ganzfried-Goldin affirms:

> It is meritorious to acquire choice wine to perform the precept of drinking the four cups. . . . One should recline while drinking the wine. If possible, one should drink the entire contents of each of the four cups, in conformity with authorities. . . . The cups are then filled a second time, and a child asks. . . . He should cover the *matzah* (so that the *matzah* is not slighted when the cups of wine alone are being raised). All take the cups in their hands and say: . . . . And each one takes his cup and holds it aloft until *Gaal yisrael* (Thou hast redeemed Israel) is conducted. All should then say the benediction *Bore peri haggafen*, and drink the second cup while reclining on the left side.[101]

Singing Hymns

Singing Psalms is another innovation in the Passover in the time of Christ. Even

though the singing of Psalms was unscriptural, it was not antiscriptural. William Barclay (1907-1978), world-renowned Scottish New Testament interpreter and Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow, clears away any underbrush that might keep one from identifying the Last Meal as a Passover feast: "The only thing in this reconstruction for which we need to go beyond the Synoptic Gospels is the information that the main meal did in fact intervene between the bread and the cup, as Paul tells us (1 Corinthians 11:25)."[102] Matthew writes: "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (**Matthew 26:30**). Mark, too, says, "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (**Mark 14:26**). Neither Luke nor Paul mentions the singing. The statement about the singing is in harmony with the Passover traditions in the time of Christ.

Barclay's comments on the Hallel and bread breaking are enlightening:

> 6. For the Jew, one of the most sacred parts of scripture, a part to be memorized in youth and never forgotten, is the Hallel. Hallel means 'Praise God', and the Hallel consists of Psalms 113-118, which are praising psalms. At this point the first two psalms of the Hallel, Psalms 113 and 114, are sung.
> 7. At this point the second cup is drunk. It is called the cup of proclaiming, because it followed the proclaiming of the hand of God in Israel's history.
> 8. At this point all who were to participate cleansed their hands. This is the normal ceremonial handwashing before a meal, for now the meal proper was to begin.
> 9. First, grace was said, and small pieces of the unleavened bread were distributed to the company. The Passover grace is:
> Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who bringest forth fruit from the earth. Blessed art thou who hast sanctified us with they commandment, and enjoined us to eat unleavened cakes.[103]

WINE IN THE PASSOVER

As one reads the history of the Pasover in the time of Christ, one detects that the cups were filled four different times, each filling was referred to as "the cup." As noted above, Ganzfried-Goldin states that "The cups are then filled a second time." The second filling of his or her cups was called The Cup of Proclamation, even though each person had his or her own cup. Thus, when the Disciples of Christ drank the third cup, it was called The Cup of Blessing, even though each one had his own individual cup. If someone had walked in during the religious festival and inquired as to the number of cups drunk so far, they would have answered according to the number of fillings. For example, if they were drinking The Cup of Blessing, they would have responded by saying, "We have drunk three cups," not thirty-nine (3 x 13). Each filling was called by a specific name to signify the commemoration of certain events that had transpired in their lives, that is to say, the lives of the Jews.

Barton's Candy Corporation published information, in the New York Times, about Jewish holidays in order for individuals to understand something about the traditions and customs of the Jewish Passover on how to conduct a Passover service:

A CUP OF WINE is placed at each table setting. The sanctification of the

> Holiday is pronounced over the first cup. Three additional cups are drunk during the course of the Seder, making a total of four, to symbolize the four expressions of the Lord's promise to redeem the children of Israel and deliver them from bondage.[104]

Ronny Wade, one of the chief advocates for the one vessel, maintains that wine could not have possibly been used in the Pasover because of its fermentation.[105] He writes: "Since leavened wine is fermented wine, and since all leaven was to be put out of their houses, it logically follows that Jesus couldn't have used fermented wine without disobeying the law."[106] Wade asserts that Jesus would have violated the Law if He had used wine in the Passover. Since the Scriptures mention the "fruit of the vine" as a drink element in the Passover, one cannot help but wonder if Jesus violated the law? Did Jesus and His apostles violate the Law by reclining during the meal? Did Jesus violate the Law by singing the Psalms during the Passover? Did He violate the Passover by using wine during four formal drinkings?

Today, controversy still rages and divides God's people. The question that carves up God's community is: Did Jesus and His disciples drink wine or grape juice during the Passover? The Book of Exodus does not mention wine or grape juice in the original Passover. Gustaf Dalman highlights the point that wine was not used in the original Passover, but, at the same time, in the time of Christ, one observes that wine was employed in the Passover—the Synoptic Gospels all testify to this practice. Listen to Dalman as he describes the Passover:

> In the East there is no meal without bread; but according to the Jewish conception no meal is complete without meat and wine. At the Passover meal it was the Paschal lamb, and under certain conditions also the so-called 'festive sacrifice', which supplied the former article of food; but wine, which the O. T. does not mention in connection with the Passover, was also essential. Psalm xxii. 5 already considers the 'full cup' as belonging to a proper meal. At the thank-offering meal the chalice was lifted up (Psalm cxvi.13). Every festive meal was in later times simply termed a 'drinking-bout, to which the verb 'to eat' was applied: 'he who "eats" the preliminary wedding celebration, "eats" also the drinking-bout (the wedding celebration, "eats" also the drinking-bout (the wedding banquet proper)'.[107]

The Jews did not consider wine a violation of the prohibition against leavened, which only pertained to the bread. The phrase "fruit of the vine" constituted a liturgical phrase for wine.[108] A. J. B. Higgins writes:

> Wine was drunk at the Last Supper, and the drinking of wine was obligatory at the Pasover. That this was an old custom is evident from its being taken for granted in the Book of Jubilees (end of the second century B.C.), which contains the first mention of it (49:6,9). Wine was, of course, drunk on other festive occasions, but at the Passover the wine was *red*. That the wine at the Last Supper was red is proved by the comparison of it with blood by our Lord.[109]

Higgins again comments about the expression "fruit of the vine" (τοῦ γενήματος

τῆς ἀμπέλου, tou genhmatos ths ampelou):

> Of particular significance are the Semitisms in Mark 14.25 (which is not repeated by Paul), especially τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου, wine being called 'the fruit of the vine' also in the Jewish benediction over wine.[110]

It is also significant that "wine" is called "Blood of grapes" in **Genesis 49:11**. Howard Marshall's comments also verify the mandatory use of wine in the Passover:

> The drinking of wine was not customary at ordinary meals, but was normal at festal meals and required at the Passover. Wine was also drunk at the ceremony of sanctifying the Sabbath. Hence the use of wine by Jesus is consistent with a Passover meal but not peculiar to this occasion. Jeremias further argues that Jesus used red wine to signify his blood. Red wine was a requirement at the Passover mean, although of course it was also served on other occasions.[111]

Within the one-cup movement, the argument against wine is a play on the liturgical phrase "fruit of the vine." The objection to wine is that no vine ever produced wine, only grape juice. This argument fails to take into consideration that the phrase is a liturgical phrase for "wine." The blessing over the cup is: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."[112] Wine is referred to as the "fruit of the vine" in this prayer. The prayer over the bread is as follows: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth."[113] The bread is referred to as "bread from the earth."

Did the earth produce bread or did it produce wheat from which bread is made? The Hebrew phrase is: לֶחֶם מִךְ הָאָרֶץ (l#j#m m!n h*a*r#J, "bread from the earth"). The earth does not produce bread nor does the vine produce wine; nevertheless, one is called "bread from the earth" and the other is called "fruit of the vine." In spite of the evidence, many still maintain that the use of wine is sinful. Surely, the early church must have used wine in the observance of the Lord' Supper; otherwise, one wonders how they got drunk from grape juice. Listen to Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians:

> 17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! (**1 Corinthians 11:17-20**)

Unless one comprehends the Passover in the first century, one cannot fully grasp the full significance of the Eucharistic sayings in the Synoptics and Pauline writings. If one understands that the third cup of the Pasover was called The Cup of Blessing or The

Cup of Redemption, this sheds some light on why Jesus instituted His Last Supper with the third formal drinking and not the first, second, or fourth. Ceil and Moishe Rosen explains:

> The gospel accounts of the Last Supper mention only two of the four Seder cups—the first and the third. According to early Jewish tradition, these two were the most important. The first cup was special because it consecrates the entire Passover ritual that followed. But the Mishnah states that the third cup was the most significant of all. The third cup had two names: the "cup of blessing," because it came after the blessing or grace after meals, and the "cup of redemption," because it represented the blood of the Paschal lamb. It was of this cup that Jesus said "This is my blood of the new Testament [covenant]" (Matthew 26:28). It is this cup of blessing that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ.[114]

As noted above, only Luke of the Synoptic Gospels mentions two of the four cups. Earlier, in this essay, I spoke of the second and third cup, not the first and third cup as mentioned by Ceil and Moshe Rosen. The scholars, as a whole, associate the first cup mentioned by Luke to be The Cup of Consecration, not The Cup of Proclamation. Nevertheless, it seems from the wording of Luke that the first cup declared by him is The Cup of Proclamation. Whether Luke points out the first or second, the point is, Luke calls attention to two of the four ritualistic cups. He is the only writer who lists two cups. On the other hand, Paul is the only one that gives the name. By observing the signification of the third cup (The Cup of Redemption), one can grasp why Jesus prefer this ritualistic cup to institute His memorial.

LUKE 22:20

The King James renders the Greek text as if the participle modifies "blood" rather than "cup." The KJV translators render this verse: "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." [115] If one applies the rule of English grammar to the participle, the participle ("which is shed") modifies "blood," which is its nearest noun.[116] The New International version also translates: "In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." On the other hand, the New Revised Standard Version translates this verse according to Greek syntax: "And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."[d] [117] The New American Standard Version (Update: 1995) also translates this verse according to Greek grammar: " And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is [a]poured out for you is the [b]new covenant in My blood."[118]

Why did the translators of the Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Version connect the participle ἐκχυννόμενον (ekxunnomen, "being shed") with ποτήριον (pothrion, "cup") and not with αἵματι (Jaimati, "blood")? In Greek grammar, the participle must modify its noun in the same case, same number, and same gender. The

word ποτήριον (pothrion, "cup") is nominative case, singular number, and neuter gender. The participle ἐκχυννόμενον (ekxunnomen, "being shed") is nominative case, singular number, and neuter gender. On the other hand, the word αἵματι (Jaimati, "blood," dative case) fails to meet the requirements for the participle to modify "blood."[119] The word "blood" is dative case, not nominative case. The word "blood" is neuter gender and singular number, but not the same case as the participle ("being shed"). Therefore the New American Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version translated according to syntax. In this Greek sentence, the only word the participle can modify is "cup," which is nominative, singular, and neuter—the same as the participle.

This understanding of Greek grammar reinforces the figurative use of the word *cup* in Luke as well as the other Synoptic writers. Scott McCormick, Jr, in dealing with the verb "is" (ἐστιν, estin), indirectly comments about Luke 22:20, which comment also is in harmony with the Greek text:

> Further, the broken bread and outpoured wine could not have been at the Last Supper the actual substance of a completed sacrifice which at the moment was uncompleted. Equally telling is the fact that a substantive reading of estin is not possible in the wine saying as recorded by Paul and Luke: "This cup [which is poured out for you] is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:25; Luke 22:20). Clearly, neither the cup nor its contents could actually be the new covenant! And it would be mere exegetical subjectivism to assume that estin should get one interpretation at one point and yet another elsewhere in varying forms of the eucharistic words.[120]

This same concept is also found in Matthew and Mark. In both of those accounts one observes that the wine saying speaks of his blood as "poured out for many" (**Mark 14:24**). Whether one says "This cup which is poured out for you" or the other says, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many," both authors are saying the same thing. The word *cup* is not literal but figurative. One can hardly read these two accounts without reflection upon the Suffering Servant prophecy in **Isaiah 53:12**: "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,[i] and he will divide the spoils with the strong,[k] because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

MATTHEW 26:27-29

Is Matthew contradicting **Luke 22:20**? The answer is no! Both accounts are in harmony. The word *cup* is used figuratively in Matthew as it is in Luke's account. An analysis of these three verses in Matthew reveals that the word *cup* stands for wine, not a literal drinking vessel. Matthew strips away all extraneous matters and gives a synopsis of this event without detailing the surroundings in which Jesus instituted His Supper:

> Then he took the cup (ποτήριον, pothrion), gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from (ἐκ, "of") it (αὐτοῦ, autou), all of you. 28 This (τοῦτο, touto) is my blood (αἷμα, Jaima) of the[b] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of (ἀπό, "from") this fruit of (ἐκ) the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you

in my Father's kingdom." (**Matthew 26:27-29**)

If one approaches this text with the idea that the word *cup* (ποτήριον, pothrion) is literal, then one automatically identifies the word *from* (ἐκ, ἐξ, "of," "from") as meaning "out of." The preposition ἐκ (ek) is employed twice in two verses—**27 and 29**. In the first instance, the word ek is translated "out of," but, for some strange reason, the "common cup" fellowship does not translate the second occurrence of ek as "out of." Why not translate ek in **verse 29** as "out of" the fruit of the vine? Both Greek grammar and just a plain reading of the English text refute this forced reading by many Christians.

What does it mean to drink "of the fruit of the vine"? How should one interpret "of"? Well, this author, Dallas Burdette, suspects that one simply interprets this phrase to mean: drink the fruit of the vine. What does it mean to drink of the cup? If one can interpret the "of the fruit of the vine" correctly, one wonders why the other phrase poses such a problem. To drink the cup is to drink wine. Paul's comments to the Corinthians should clarify this obstacle, or enigma, in the eyes of many Christians: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (**1 Corinthians 11:26**).

As one seeks to understand this misunderstood text (**Matthew 26-27-29**), it is necessary to analyze the Greek text in order to shed more light on the correct interpretation. **Verse 28** begins with a demonstrative pronoun (τοῦτο, touto, "this") used as the subject of the sentence. The demonstrative pronouns ("this" [near] or "that"[far]) may be used with the force of a substantive. In **Matthew 26:28**, the demonstrative pronoun (τοῦτο, touto, "this") is neuter, singular, and nominative case. Since it is neuter, one may translate "this blood." In this sentence, the word *blood* (αἷμα, Jaima) is predicate nominative, singular number, and neuter gender. The verb "to be" (ἐστιν, estin, "is") is followed by a predicate nominative ((αἷμα, Jaima), never a direct object. In other words, "blood" is not receiving the action of the verb. Rather, it is telling you something about the subject (τοῦτο, touto, "this").

To illustrate this principle still further, the following sentence is helpful: "It is I." In grammarians' terminology, the "I" is "predicating" something about the subject. Since the "I" is not receiving the action of the verb ("is"), the pronoun "I" cannot be a direct object, but rather a predicate nominative. To express the above text (**26:28**) another way, one can say that the copulative verb εἰμί (eimi, "is") equates what follows ("blood") with what precedes ("this"). Therefore, the complement following the verb requires a complement in the nominative case[121] to complete the ideas. The near demonstrative pronoun "this" equals "blood" and "blood" equals "this." The copulative verb "is" (the verb "to be"[122]) in **Matthew 26:28** links the subject ("this") and predicate ("blood")—"This (subject) is my blood (predicate)."

The antecedent of "this" (τοῦτο, touto) in **verse 28** is "cup" (ποτήριον) in **verse 27** and the antecedent of "it" (αὐτοῦ) in **verse 27** is "cup" (ποτήριον). The function of a personal pronoun in Greek is similar to its function in English. They are used to replace nouns and to avoid monotony. For example, the following Greek sentence illustrates the use of a pronoun and its antecedent: "I see the disciple and I am teaching him (βλέπω τὸν μαθητὴν καὶ διδάσκω αὐτον, blepw ton maqhthn kai didaskwn auton. The use of the pronoun (auton) is much better than repeating the subject maqhthn (disciple)—I see the

disciple (maqhthvn) and I am teaching the disciple (maqhthvn). In **Matthew 26:27**, the personal pronoun "it" (autou) is singular in number and neuter in gender, which agrees with its antecedent "cup" (pothvrion), which is also singular number and neuter in gender. On the other hand, the antecedent and its pronoun do not always agree in case—case depends upon its use in the sentence. The pronoun "it" is genitive case, but the noun "cup" is nominative.

Since the demonstrative pronoun "this" is equivalent to "blood" and has for its antecedent "cup," one is conscious that the word "cup" is equivalent to the wine, which represents His blood. In **verse 27**, Jesus told them to drink the cup—"drink from it (autou), all of you." What were they to drink? Both the pronoun "it" (**v.27**) and the "demonstrative pronoun "this" (**v.28**) have for their antecedent the word "cup." The word "blood" also renames its subject "this." Following this statement by Jesus, He says, "I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom" (**26:29**). The noun "cup" equals the pronoun "it" and the demonstrative pronoun "this" equals the noun "blood" and the noun "cup" and the pronoun "it" and the demonstrative pronoun "this," and the predicate nominative "blood" all represent "this fruit of the vine." Ray Summers writes: "The use of a word in context (syntax) is a better indicator of its meaning than a definition in a vocabulary list."[123]

CONCLUSION

This analysis of the Eucharistic sayings in the Synoptics and Pauline writings are not designed to impugn the motives of those who do not concur in the findings of this author. Just a perusal of the various journals among the one-cup and nonSunday school Christians, makes one conscious of their sincerity, but this writer cannot admit to their arguments to maintain disunity among the people of God. One's sincerity is not a proof of one's arguments. In this analysis of the disputed passages dealing with the Last Supper, there is repetition, which, to some extent, is unavoidable. Even in the arrangement of the subjects discussed in this chapter, this author has approached the subject in the most appropriate manner to accomplish his objectives with clarity.

There is subjectivity in the arrangement of the nine chapters in this series, but each chapter is designed to build upon another chapter as in a pyramid. This composition has sought to examine the arguments of the controversial passages advanced by the one-cup movement with respect. An authentic interpretation of the various authors of the New Testament dealing with the Last Supper must relate the facts as they really happened. Subjective interpretation of the various texts does not destroy the reality of the facts—the historical facts surrounding the Passover in the first century.

Many of the arguments advanced by the one-cup movement are ill founded, even though sincerely set forth. Several names are revealed in this chapter, but the mentioning of names is not designed to blacken the reputation of any of these godly men. As pointed out above, one cannot avoid believing that the authors (one cup and nonSunday school) referred to in this essay believe that truth is on their side. It is time that believers reexamine their traditions of orthodoxy. The following citation calls attention to the proper use of tradition in the lives of God's people:

Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the

difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[124]

It is in this same frame of mind that Sir Robert Anderson, in 1914, wrote a book defending the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this treatise, he lamented the rationalism of his day, especially the evangelicalism that gave way to the inroads of rationalism. His remarks against those who adopted so-called orthodoxy are as applicable today as it was then. Pay attention to Anderson as he goes right to the very heart of the problem: "Orthodoxy may thus be maintained by blindly obeying 'the voice of the Church'; but orthodoxy is not faith, nor is the voice of the Church the Word of God."[125] What is this Last Supper about? When the Eucharistic sayings are read in the assembly, one witnesses, as it were, to the mighty act of God in the redemption of humanity. Whether one uses one common cup or multiple cups, the result is the same—witness to the Gospel.

When Christian break up over the use of vessels to be employed in the communion, believers are building the City of Destruction instead of the City of God. The Gospel is not one cup and nonSunday school opinions, but rather, the Gospel is the Word of God coming from eternity into time. The Lord's Supper is a picture of Christ's sacrifice, a sacrifice represented throughout the New Testament as a cosmic necessity; in other words, Jesus is the Lord slain from the foundation of the world (**Ephesians 1:9**). This is what the Lord's Supper depicts for the believer. Just a laid-back reading of the Eucharistic sayings reveals that the precious blood of Christ is the theme of the Christian community—forgiveness through His blood. In the Lord's Supper, one discovers that the Cross of Christ is the supreme demonstration of the power and grandeur of God's love for a lost and dying world.

In the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, God demonstrates externally to His people through visible signs His reign of Favor. In the observance of the Lord's Supper, every Christian is consciously aware of the vicarious sufferings of the Lord Jesus and the burden of human guilt as He cried that cry of abandonment. One sees Him stagger, as it were, in the loneliness He experienced before He said, "It is finished" (**John 19:30**). The Last Supper is related to the redemptive meaning of His death. Christians should approach the Lord's Table with a consciousness of participation in the body and blood of Christ. In many Christian communities today, one witnesses the mischief of factions with their battle slogans. Just as in Corinth, the divisions placed in question the celebration of the Lord's Supper as it does in the twentieth-first century. This is why Paul writes with passion concerning their carnality:

> 14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak to sensible people;
> judge for yourselves what I say. 16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we
> give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we
> break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we,
> who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. 18 Consider the
> people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19
> Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is
> anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God,
> and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the

cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. [22] Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (**1 Corinthians 10:14-22**)

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[1] The word *Eucharistic* is used as an adjective to describe the Last Supper sayings. Terry L. Miethe, *Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal words* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1988), 85, defines the word *Eucharist* as follows:

> **EUCHARIST.** From the Greek word *eucharistein*, "to give thanks." The Eucharist is a service of thanksgiving for the believer's redemption by Jesus' death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Eucharist is a sacrament (it gives grace) by which the person who partakes of the Eucharist is spiritually changed and united into the community of Jesus' spirit and body: the Church. See: 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Luke 22:19. See: **Communion, Lord's Supper, Sacrament**.

This author, Dallas Burdette, does not use the word *Eucharist* as sacramentalists, particularly the Catholics. R. T. Beckwith, Warden of Latimer House, Oxford, s.v. "Eucharist" in *New Dictionary of Theology*, editors, Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 236, writes:

> **Eucharist** (Gr., meaning 'thanksgiving') is an early patristic name (found in the Didache, Ignatius, etc.) for the Lord's Supper or Holy communion. It is derived from the thanksgivings or graces which, from the Last Supper onwards, have been part of the sacramental action.

[2] Since this essay cites sources from the one-cup and non Sunday school segment of the so-called Restoration Movement, it is appropriate to cite three sources from their own writings to give weight to the contention that the Last Supper occurred during the Passover. For example, the first is from the late E. H. Miller (1-25-1909—12-29-1989),

who wrote: "The words, 'and they were eating . . .' refer to the eating of the Passover meal which immediately preceded the institution of the Lord's Supper," in E. H. Miller, Proof Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural (La Grange, GA: E. H. Miller, nd—approximately 1956), 22. Miller also calls attention to "four cups of the fruit of the vine" in the Passover (Ibid.). Second, James Orten and Alton Bailey, too, admits that the Last Supper occurred during the Passover: "The phrase 'as they were eating' referred to the fact that the institution took place while they were eating the Jewish Passover Supper" in James D. Orten and Alton B. Bailey, *Sanitation in Communion,* second edition (LaGrange, GA: The Informer Publication, 1993), 12. And, finally, See also Ronny F. Wade, *Thoughts On The Communion* (Harrodsburg, Indians: Robert Strain, 1963), 7, who also admits they were eating the Passover at the time of the Last Supper.

[3] See William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 16-34 for a detailed study of the Passover traditions in the time of Christ.

[4] If one wishes to read the Greek and Hebrew characters, one must order the Greek and Hebrew fonts from Galaxie Software. Click on Greek and Hebrew to the left of the menu.

[5] Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus—Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* (England: SPCK, 1925; reprint, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004). 161 (page reference is to the reprint edition).

[6] E. H. Miller and M. L. Lemley, *THE CUP OF THE LORD: WHAT IS IT?: A Friendly Discussion Between E. H. Miller and M. L. Lemley* (LaGrange, GA: E. H. Miller, nd, 1956/1957—approximate date), 13. These comments of E. H. Miller will be discussed in detail later in this paper.

[7] Ernest F. Kevan, *The Lord's Supper* (Great Britain: Burlington Press, 1966, 1973), 27.

[8] Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus—Jeshua*, 153-154.

[9] For examples of this mindset (The word *cup* means a drinking vessel), one should consult one of their major publications—*Old Paths Advocate*, published by Don L. King (publisher) and Ronny F. Wade (assistant publisher), 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550. See also E. H. Miller and M. L. Lemley, *THE CUP OF THE LORD: WHAT IS IT?: A Friendly Discussion Between E. H. Miller and M. L. Lemley* (LaGrange, GA: E. H. Miller, nd, 1957—approximate date), 12-30 and 41-54. Also, Ronny F. Wade, *Thoughts on the Communion*, Ibid.*„ 12-16.* See also E. H. Miller, *Proof: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural* (E. H. Miller: LaGrange, GA, nd), 29. Unfortunately, Christianity has been degraded into a system of petty exactions with senseless and intolerant dogmatism toward those who do not concur with their particular brand of orthodoxy. Today, many believers are moving away from an attitude of intolerance to a spirit of love, in spite of differences. The Gospel needs to be rescued from the mindset that identifies the Gospel with one's beliefs about a so-called worship service with its five rituals.

[10] See Ronald David Witherup, "The Cross of Jesus: A Literary-Critical Study of

Matthew 27," (Ph. D dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1985), 95, where he comments on an important methodology of literary criticism.

> Contemporary literary criticism accepts the object of its study as literature in and of itself, not as a means to an end. As opposed to the other Biblical criticism, there is no intention to look behind the text to discern history or sources. Literary criticism looks at a text, rather than through it. To use Murray Krieger's apt metaphor, the text is to be viewed not as a "window" through which one looks to discern what is on the other side; rather, it is a "mirror" and the meaning of the text is thus on "this side" of the reading experience.

This author, Dallas Burdette, has witnessed this looseness in the writings of those who advance a wooden literalness of the Eucharistic sayings in the Synoptics and Pauline writings. Many believers do not make a distinction between the *implied reader* and the *real reader.* The *implied reader* understood the information that the authors of the New Testament did not elaborate on. On the other hand, *the real reader*, which is us, have to go to outside sources in order to fill in what the *implied reader* already knew. For example, one should consult the history of the traditions surrounding the Passover in the first century in order to discover what the implied reader already knew by his or own culture.

[11] John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, Biblical Exegesis: *A Beginner's Handbook* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1987), 75.

[12] Mark Allen Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 1-10.

[13] Ibid., 7.

[14] Ibid.

[15] See M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms, 6th* ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), 269, where he says,

> Iser distinguishes between the "implied reader," who is established by the text itself as one who will respond in specific ways to the "response-inviting structures" of the text, and the "actual reader," whose responses are inevitably colored by his or her accumulated private experiences.

[16] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 149-150; Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974; David Robert Bauer, "*The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Literary-Critical Examination,*," (Ph. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1985), 24-26; Dorothy Jean Weaver, "The Missionary Discourse in the Gospel of Matthew: A Literary Critical Analysis," (Ph. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1987), 66.

[17] See W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Kentucky: The University press of Kentucky, 1982), 268, where he counsels Christians not to reject literary criticism.

> Religious thinkers should be sympathetic to criticism because it is a branch of philosophy; it is an effort to get at certain truths about signs, knowledge, and reality. If these remarks seem at all platitudinous, let me add that I have taken the trouble to make them because it seems to me possible for the thought and scholarship of religious person (especially in America today) to be too far sold in the cultivation of certain merely historical informational, and neutral techniques. This may have been for a time a necessary phase of competition with secular science and secular education. But there is no reason why Christians should be the last (or even be slow) to transcend the limitations of such knowledge, to outgrow pedantic misconceptions and participate in literary philosophy.

[18] See A. B. J. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1952, 1964), 17, where he states: "The chief authorities for the identification of the Last Supper as a Passover meal are: G. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, Engl. Tr., 1929, pp. 86-132; Strack-Billerbeck, op. cit., ii, 1924, pp. 812 ff; iv, 1928, pp. 41 ff; and Jerias, op.cit., pp. 10-49, to the last of which in particular I am greatly indebted in what follows."

[19] See Higgins, Ibid., where he speaks of the probability of the common cup in the time of Christ: "3. Another objection is that our accounts speak of a common cup, whereas, it is alleged, at the Passover, individual cups were used. But the probabilities are in favor of the use of the common cup in the time of Jesus." He maintained the Passover tradition, but, at the same time, he could not reconcile the language of the Synoptics with the use of individual cups in the Passover. He, like so many other scholars failed to interpret the Gospel accounts in light of the traditions practiced in the time of Christ.

[20] G. H. Box, "The Jewish Antecedents of the Eucharist," *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1902): 359.

[21] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 68. Ronny F. Wade, preacher and writer of the one-cup and nonSunday School movement within the Churches of Christ, stresses that "individual cups" did not exist until the end of the nineteenth century, which was invented by the Rev. J. G. Thomas, a minister and physician, in Ronny F. Wade, *This Do In Remembrance Of Me: Thoughts on the communion* (Robert Strain: Harrodsburg, 1963), 22-23. It is true that Dr. J. G. Thomas did receive a patent on the small individual cups in 1894, but he did not invent the use of individual cups. Individual cups were used in the Passover, not just the nineteenth century.

[22] G. H. Box, "The Jewish Antecedents of the Eucharist," Ibid., 360.

[23] F. Gavin, *Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1928), vii.

[24] Daniel B. Wallace addresses the credibility of *Thayer Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* in *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 25:

> Deissmann demonstrated that the vast bulk of NT vocabulary was to be found in the papyri. The

> pragmatic effect of Deissmann's work was to render obsolete virtually all lexica and lexical commentaries written before the turn of the century. (Thayer's lexicon, published in 1886, was consequently outdated shortly after it came off the press—yet, curiously, it is still relied on today by many NT students).

[25] Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek—English Lexicon of the New Testament* (T & T. Clark, 1901; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), XII (page references are to reprint edition).

[26] David Allen Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1993), 22.

[27] L. Berkhof, *Principles of biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 114.

[28] Ibid., 115.

[29] Elgin Moyer, revised and enlarged by Earle E. Cairns, "Laud, William," in *Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 236, writes:

> In 1633 made Archbishop of Canterbury and began work as head of the church with great zeal and determination. In 1637 attempted to force ritualism on the Scottish Presbyterian church. This led to rebellion in the entire Scottish nation. When the king endeavored to squelch the rebellion, trouble broke out at home, and the Civil War of 1642-1649 followed. Laud's severe program against the Puritans led to migration of 400,000 of them to New England and the Caribbean. In 1640 impeached for treason, placed in confinement, and sent to the Tower in 1641. Tried later, and in 1645 with great firmness he met his death on the scaffold at the Tower. A High churchman and early exponent of what later came to be known as the Anglo-Catholic school.

[30] Harmon B. Niver, *A School History of England* (New York: American Book Company, 1904), 219.

[31] Ibid., 221.

[32] Emil Brunner, "The Meaning of the Last Supper," in *The Great Invitation and other Sermons* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press,1955), 119.

[33] A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, 17.

b Some manuscripts *the new*

a Some manuscripts *the new*

[34] Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *The theological dictionary of the New Testamen*t (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), Vol. 6, 148.

[35] Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, William b. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982, 1993)141-142.

[36] Ibid., 142.

[37] Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *The theological dictionary of the New Testamen*t (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), Vol. 6, 154.

[38] Ibid., 155.

[39] Ibid.

[40] William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, 45.

[41] J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (United States: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 25.

[42] Miller, *Proof: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural*, 29.

[43] William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, 45-46.

[44] Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *The theological dictionary of the New Testamen*t (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), Vol. 2, 133. The emphasis (underlining) is mine—RDB.

[45] A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1952, 1964), 30.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Scott McCormick, Jr., *The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 55.

[48] I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand ?Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 43.

[49] William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper (1967)*, 61. It is significant that Barclay understands the word *cup* as equivalent to "blood."

[50] Ibid., 37.

[51] See Ronny Wade, "Religious Controversy," *Old Paths Advocate,* Vol., LXXIX, no. 7 (July 2005): 8, writes about Miller's defense of the one-cup and nonSunday schools position: "Another preacher who distinguished himself in debate was E. H. Miller of LaGrange, GA. During the fifties and sixties he traveled widely both preaching and debating."

[52] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 175.

[53] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 806.

[54] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text With Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1952, 1966), 545.

[55] Ibid., 546.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *The theological dictionary of the New Testamen*t (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), Vol. 6, 155.

[59] See Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to Mark* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), 545. Taylor himself believes that the Eucharist occurred during the Passover.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 68.

[62] Taylor, *The Gospel According to Mark, 545.*

[63] Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 69-70.

[64] Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus—Jeshua: Studies in the Gospel*, 108.

[65] Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 19 (emphasis mine—RDB).

[66] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 68-69.

[67] W. F. Slater, *St. Matthew*, The New Century bible, 1925), revised by G. H. Box , New and Enlarged Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 338.

[68] William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, 23 (emphasis mine—RDB).

[69] Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 19 (emphasis mine—RDB).

[70] W. F. Slater and revised by G. H. Box, *St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, TTD, 1925), 338.

[71] See Chapter 9 in this series for an in-depth study as to the meaning of the Lord's Supper—"The Significance of the Last Supper: Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ.

[72] Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, 17.

[73] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 249.

[74] D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), s.v. "Redaction Criticism: on the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," by D. A. Carson, 136.

[75] See Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Know, 1981), s. v. "Mishna," 123, for a listing of the Tractates of the Mishnah. Also, consult Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. 1, s.v. "Abbreviations," 39.

[76] See F. B. Huey Jr. and Bruce Corley, *A Student's Dictionary for Biblical & Theological Studies: A Handbook of Special and Technical Terms* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1983), 127, where they write:

> **MISHNAH**. A codification of the traditional oral law of the Tannaim as distinct from the written Torah of the Pentateuch. Committed to writing ca A.D. 200 by Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi (The Prince): it is the basic halakic document of Judaism, containing sixty-three tractates organized into six major divisions. Talmud.

[77] Ibid., 184, where Huey and Corley comment:

> **TALMUD**. The name given to the combination of the Mishnah and the Gemara: the compilations of rabbinic teaching and interpretation made by the Amoraim during the third through sixth centuries A.D. In the academies of Babylonia and Palestine. These compilations are called the Babylonian Talmud, comprising some two and one-half million words, and the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud, a shorter version.

[78] See Dallas Burdette, 'False Prophets in the gospel of Matthew, Who Are They?' (Doctor of Ministry Dissertation, Erskine Theological Seminary in Due West, South Carolina, 1999), 48-63, for a detailed study of the oral and codified traditions of the Jews.

[79] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus,* 69-70.

[80] See A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, 17.

[81] Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 70.

[82] Ibid., 70.

[83] F. B. Huey, Jr. & Bruce Corley, *A Student's Dictionary for Biblical & Theological Studies*, 190, write:

> **TORAH**. The word properly means "instruction." The name of he first division of he Hebrew Bible composed of the first five books: it is also called the Law. Nebiim. Ketubim.

[84] Ceil and Moshe Rosen, *Christ in the Passover, Why Is This Night Different?* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 51.

[85] James Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), Vol., 4, s.v. "Passover," by Nathan Isaacs, 2258

[86] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 48.

[87] Ibid., 49.

[88] Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus—Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels*, 108.

[89] A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, 45

[90] Ibid., 46

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Harold A. Sevener, ed., *Passover Haggadah for Biblical Jews and Christians* (New York: Beth Sar Shalom—The House of the Prince of Peace, nd), 41-42.

[98] A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, 47.

[99] William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 22-21

[100] Ibid., 22-24.

[101] Ganzfried-Golden, *Code of Jewish Law* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1963), 3: 45, 48-49.

[102] William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 25. For a detained analysis of the Passover meal, see Barclay, Ibid., 16-34.

[103] Ibid., 23.

[104] Copies of the *Traditional Way to Make a Seder* may be ordered from Barton's Candy Corporation, 80 DeKalb Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201. Also, another insightful book on the Pasover is found in Harold A. Sevener, ed., *Passover Haggadah: for Biblical Jews and Christians* (Orangebur, NY: Beth Sar Shalom: The House of the Prince of Peace, nd).

[105] See Ronny F. Wade, *Thoughts on the Communion* (Harrodsburg, Indiana: Robert Stein, 1863), 20.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus—Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels*, 147.

[108] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 162.

[109] A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, 21.

[110] Ibid., 24.

[111] I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 60.

[112] *Messianic Passover Haggadah* (Charlotte, NC: Chosen People Ministries, Inc, nd), 30.

[113] Ibid., 31.

[114] Ceil and Moshe Rosen, *Christ in the Passover: Why Is This Night Different?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 59. The underlining is mine (RDB).

[115] *King James Version.*, Lk 22:20. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995.

[116] For a detailed study of the English and Greek grammar dealing with participles, see Chapter 6 in this study—"Passover Traditions in the First Century."

d Other ancient authorities lack, in whole or in part, verses 19b-20 (*which is given . . . in my blood*)

[117] *New Revised Standard Version*, Lk 22:20. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1989.

a Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24

b Ex 24:8; Jer 31:31; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15

[118] *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update*, Lk 22:20. LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

[119] See William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 233, where he writes:

- A participle is an "-ing" word like "eating," "sleeping," "procrastinating"'
- A participle is a verbal adjective, sharing characteristics of both a verb and an adjective;
- As a verb, a participle has tense (present, aorist, perfect) and voice (active, middle, passive);
- As an adjective, a participle agrees with the noun it modifies in case, number, an gender.

[120] Scott McCormick, Jr., *The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 26.

j Or *many*

k Or *numerous*

b Some manuscripts *the new*

[121] The nominative case is the case of designation. It is the "naming" case. Its main use is that of the subject of the sentence or clause.

[122] This verb does not have voice since it shows state of being, not action. The grammar books call this verb a "copula," that is to say, copula means to link or connect. It usually states no action or state of its own like other verbs. In other words, it serves merely to connect a subject and a predicate. Another item about εἰμι is that it always has the same case after it that precedes it. It never takes a direct object. If the subject that proceeds is nominative case, then the predicate after it is nominative. The verb εἰμι has no power over cases at all. It only links. The verb εἰμί requires a complement rather than an object to complete its meaning. Since it never takes a direct object, the accusative will not be used. The verb "to be" in Greek, as in English, takes a predicate nominative or adjective. It is not always necessary to include a form of the verb "to be" in a Greek sentence; the verb may simply be understood from the context. The predicate nominative may be placed first for emphasis. A simple rule for determining the subject will be this: The subject usually has the article.

[123] Ray Summers, Revised by Thomas Sawyer, *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman, 1995), 29.

[124] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 60.

[125] Sir Robert Anderson, *The Lord From Heaven: A Study of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: Pickering & Inglis, 1914), 88.

The Meaning of the Last Supper: Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ

Thrust Statement: **The Eucharistic Meal sets forth the whole of what Christianity is all about**.

Scripture Reading: **Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-31; Luke 22:7-38; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

How do you approach the Lord's Table? What do you reflect upon as you eat the bread and drink the Cup of Thanksgiving? Do you think of redemption? Do you meditate about forgiveness? Do you consider God's judgment? This Supper should tell one that one deserves God's judgment of punishment a thousandfold. This Meal should cause one to pray seriously: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (**Matthew 6:12**). In this Meal, God exemplifies pardon before the eyes of each participant. One is ever conscious that He implements forgiveness on the Cross. Whoever receives forgiveness through the Cross of Jesus can never remained unchanged. This Feast unfolds the deepest mystery of the Gospel of Christ—forgiveness. When one's relationship with God is made new through the Cross, one's relationship with others will never be the same. This fellowship Meal is a constant reminder of the word of pardon and the deed of reconciliation.

Many Christians do not seem to appreciate the true significance of the Lord's Supper. The Communion is a venerated custom that the body of Christ has participated in since the time Christ instituted His memorial Meal during His last Passover meal with His disciples. Some churches celebrate this Feast on a weekly basis, but, on the other hand, there are churches that neglect this Institution, at least they do not observe it very often. Is the Eucharist one of the dying branches within the Christian community? Is this Supper sacrificed to the times? Has it lost its meaning? Does the Lord's Supper speak a message to you? What is this communication of fellowship in the body and blood of Christ? Does this Meal, to you, signify unity among God's people? Does this Meal remind you of the priestly prayer of Jesus in **John 17**? Listen to the prayer of the Son of God as He prepares for His "finished" work of redemption for lost humanity—death upon the Cross:

> My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, [21] that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: [23] I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (**John 17:20-23**).

Is the Communion a constant reminder of the message of the Cross? Christian unity can only be found in the message that Jesus is God's Way of salvation. It is only in this message of the Cross that one can find true unity. In this Meal, God has a meaning for His people. God speaks to His people through this activity—eating and drinking in remembrance of Christ. Paul, as he writes to the Corinthians, gives a saying from Christ that neither Matthew nor Mark records: "Do this in remembrance of me" (**1 Corinthians 11:24**). This Institution has always been a constant reminder to the Church that God lays upon the hearts of His people the message of the Gospel in and through the sharing of the bread and wine.

One cannot partake of this Repast without a consciousness of one's need of redemption. This Meal binds individuals to one another. God reaches out to His people, not just through the verbal preaching of the Word, but through this act of commemoration in which the grace of God is reenacted, as it were, in the hearts of His people. In this act, God also addresses His children through the eye as well as through the verbal telling of the story of redemption. The Lord's Supper is a reminder that God reaches out to the down-and-out. This Meal is an unbroken reminder of God sending His Son to seek and to save the lost. This Feast is a firm reminder that even in divorce, God is still reaching out to heal and to forgive the broken hearted. This Communion is for sinners saved by grace.

The phrase "in remembrance of me" calls for focus upon the death of Christ. The community of Christ can never get away from the Jesus of history. Whenever the church assembles, there is, and must be, a corporate memory of Him who came to rescue both men and women from condemnation. The Lord's Supper is a constant reminder of the Incarnate God. Paul uses the Greek word αςναψμνησϊ (anamnhsis, "reminder, remembrance") in **1 Corinthians 11:24, 25** to call attention to reflection upon redemption. The first reference is to the bread and the second reference is to the cup (His blood). As one eats the bread and drinks the cup, he or she stands between two worlds—the past and the future.

Christians not only reflect upon the past—incarnation and crucifixion—but also beyond—Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father. The beyond is also found in **11:26**: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." [1] One can hardly reflect upon the phrase "until he comes" without a reflection upon Paul's closing words in this Epistle: "If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be on him. Come, O Lord[b]"(**15:22**)! "Come, O Lord" in Aramaic is μαραψνα θαψ (marana qa). As Christians gather around the Lord's Table, they are bound up, as it were, with a corporate memory of real historical events. These emblems are constant reminders of His betrayal by Judas, His crucifixion upon Golgotha, His empty tomb, His appearance in the upper room after His resurrection, and His final return with His angels "in the

twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (**15:52**).

In **1 Corinthians 11**, Paul is conscious of the standing of the past as well as the future, that is to say, he is conscious between the memory and the hope—"Do this in remembrance of me" and "You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." In this present world, Christians need something that lies beyond to make life meaningful. Since all human history is a pilgrimage, everyone needs a supernatural reality that reaches beyond this earthly existence. In the Lord's Supper, there is a sense in which Christians are rehearsing, or anticipating, the day when the elect will be home, that is, gathered around the Father's Table.

As Christians reflect upon the Lord's Supper, this consideration is an endless notice that Christianity is a historical religion. In the Supper, one is confronted with the mystery of time and the mystery of eternity. This Meal is a perpetual refresher of Christ offering His body as a sin offering for the sins of the world. In this Feast, one comes face to face with the eternal activity of God's passion for lost humanity. The Communion is a constant reminder of the past, the present, and the future. This Table Fellowship paints a picture of how God bore our sins in the cross of Christ. Emil Brunner gives an outstanding analysis of forgiveness as he seeks to express the wonder and miracle of forgiveness, which is what the Lord's Supper is all about. In his sermon on "The Merciful King and the Unforgiving Servant," he writes with penetrating insight:

> When it happens to one of us that God forgives all his debts, a miracle happens, the greatest miracle of all. Forgiveness of sin is an even greater miracle than the resurrection of the dead. For the resurrected Lazarus had to die again. But a debt forgiven is forgiven for all eternity. Forgiveness of sin means not only the breaking down of a barrier between God and us; it is at the same time the building up of the right relationship between the Creator and us. Forgiveness of sin, acceptance of God's mercy, is nothing less than sonship, the establishment of communion between God and us. Whenever this occurs, something unheard of, a great miracle takes place. Truly the very opposite of the self-evident! The very opposite of what we may know in advance or by ourselves.[2]

In the Lord's Supper, one can hear the words of Jesus: "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven." As one eats the bread and drinks the wine, one is reminded over and over that one has forgiveness of sins and friendship with God through the work of Christ upon the Cross. In this Banquet of the church, one also witnesses the performance of an act of fellowship, an act that signifies the unity of the body of Christ. As a congregation, both men and women join as one family in this corporate Festival. The Lord's Supper is a corporate act of the body of Christ. In this eating and drinking together, one witnesses Christian solidarity of fellowship within the body of Christ. Since the bread and wine are constant reminders of His grace, His mercy, and His peace, this realization should ever be a reminder of the corporate aspect of this unique fellowship in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. As one reflects upon this involvement, one can hardly fail to recall the words of Paul:

> Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we

all partake of the one loaf (**1 Corinthians 10:16-17**).

Through this fellowship of eating and drinking, one finds an expression of the truth that this relationship is grounded in an action of God. In the Lord's Supper, one detects that each person is joined to the congregation of God's children in such a way that is not visualized through just the mere preaching of the Word. In this form of proclamation, one perceives that this fellowship is grounded in an act of Jesus upon Calvary. The deeper meaning of this Rite conveys the vicarious passion and death of Jesus upon the Cross for a dying humanity. Taking part in this Feast reminds everyone that life is one continuous act of worship. When Christians assemble to break bread together, this eating and drinking, as such, is the revealer of God's righteousness and love, which is about His justifying grace.

As stated above, the message of the Gospel is conveyed through the Lord's Supper. In this Banquet, one is reminded that Christ became a curse for the human race. This Supper rings a bell, as it were, that Christ was made sin for the world. In this Supper, one is aware that one's life is hidden with Christ in God. As one joins in this Meal, one is reminded again that everything necessary for one's forgiveness has been done in and through Jesus' death upon the Tree. In this eating and drinking, one discovers that God has done what must be done to reconcile both men and women unto Himself. In this Ceremonial Dinner, one is ever mindful that God not only speaks the message of redemption, but that He also reenacts this message of redemption. One cannot take part in this Feast without a recollection of this costly forgiveness. This Supper is a perpetual reminder that something had to be done about guilt. In the Lord's Super, one witnesses an inconceivable exchange—His death for your life. It is through faith that one receives this grace that is portrayed in the Lord's Supper. One cannot assemble around this Table without reflection upon the death of Jesus as the atoning act of God.[3]

Even though this message is written primarily in the third person, let us, just for a moment, turn to the second person. What does this Supper mean to *you*? As *you* participate in this Meal, do *you* see the passion of God for sinful humanity? Do *you* see God bearing the sins of the world? Do *you* see the incarnation? Do *you* see the coming of eternity into the midst of time? The Lord's Supper is a persistent communication of God's scheme of redemption in and through Christ. F. J. Leenhardt says, "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper derives its meaning from the conditions of the redemptive action of God in Christ."[4] A reflection upon the Lord's Supper is contemplation upon the past. When one remembers the life, death, and burial of Jesus in the Supper, the past becomes reactive in one's thinking about the atonement made upon Calvary. As a Memorial, this reflection calls to mind one's deliverance from the world of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

CONCLUSION

In this Supper, one is always conscious that one is the object of God's redemptive action. This biblical Memorial is a reminder of God's divine action of eternal newness—a new creation in Christ Jesus (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). In this Supper, one is put in mind that the past reaches out and joins the present. This Table is a means of teaching God's community of believers about the atonement and Jesus' coming again. Just as in baptism, Christians participate in this great redemption. Through this Feast, one is ever mindful that God's grace is ever active. This Meal assures the permanent actuality of the redemptive

act of God in the memory of His children. When God's children remember the past, this remembrance makes the atonement present and actual in their lives. In the Supper, the past and the present mingle. This eating and drinking will always keep alive this redemptive action on God's part until Jesus comes again. This Memorial Meal demonstrates God's love and pardon. Remember, the purpose of the bread and wine is to take one back to the scene of redemption. In this Meal, the whole of what Christianity is all about is expressed.

In the Lord's Supper, one witnesses the victory of Jesus over the powers of hell. Why do Christians celebrate this Ceremony as a corporate body? In this celebration, the church is reminded of its unity through the atonement of Jesus upon Calvary. In this Supper, Christians behold the broken body of Christ on the Cross at Golgotha. This crucifixion is symbolized in the broken bread in the Communion. Paul writes in this fashion about the bread: "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me'" (**1 Corinthians 11:23-24**). In the same manner, the outpoured wine is representative of His outpoured blood upon the Cross. Matthew, too, writes about the symbolism in the wine:

> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the[b] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom" (**Matthew 26:27-29**).[5]

Through the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christians are able to share in this atonement of Christ upon the Tree. Here at Calvary, Jesus crushed the head of Satan. Emil Brunner captures this defeat of Satan's powers very graphically when he writes:

> Then the death of Jesus Christ, from being a catastrophe, becomes the victory of God over you and your godlessness, then He draws you into His own eternal life, enabling you to share in His resurrection and making you by this means a new creation.[6]

As a "new creation," Christians no longer live just for themselves. When Christ enters the picture, individualism, as such, comes to an end. There is to be a transformation of the human personality. In Corinth, Christians were divided into various camps (**1 Corinthians 1:10-17**), but this mindset of individualism did not uphold the unity of the Sacrament:

> Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (**10:16-17**).

Christians are to work for unity within the body of Christ. Because there is "one loaf" (Christ), Christians are to maintain unity within the body of Christ. Why? Believers still represent "one loaf"—"We, who are many, are one body." Some saints in Corinth

forgot about the true meaning of the Lord's Supper. Thus, Paul seeks to nip-in-the-bud the divisive spirit of individualism:

> In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. [18] In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. [19] No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, [21] for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. [22] Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not (**11:17-22**)!

The divisions placed in question the true meaning of the Lord's Supper. The congregation should be a fellowship of men and women in unity, but Paul presents a shameless picture of social cleavage, which is still rampant among many Christian fellowships. The proclamation in the Lord's Supper is intended to awaken and strengthen faith in the Lord Jesus and to create unity among His followers. In conclusion, one should never forget that the Last Supper is related to the redemptive meaning of His death. One cannot eat this bread and drink this cup without a consciousness of the condescending initiative of God who seeks to redeem sinners. The bread and wine in the Last Supper derives its meaning from the redemptive action of God in Christ Jesus. What does this Memorial Meal mean to you?

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[1] All citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), unless stated otherwise.

b In Aramaic the expression *Come, O Lord* is *Marana tha.*

[2] Emil Brunner, "The Merciful King and the Unforgiving Servant," in *Sowing and Reaping: The Parables of Jesus* (London: The Trinity Press, 1964), 63

[3] I owe a great deal of my insight to Donald Baillie, *The Theology of the Sacraments and Other Papers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957). Even though he has much to offer, still I do not always agree with his explanations. He, like so many of us, allows his traditions to color his interpretations of various texts to give credence to his presuppositions

[4] Oscar Cullmann and F. J. Leenhardt, *Essays on the Lord's Supper* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1958), 66.

b Some manuscripts *the new*

[5] See a forthcoming essay, "The Meaning of the Eucharistic Sayings in the Synoptics and Pauline writings," for an examination of the Greek syntax of the Matthean account.

[6] Emil Brunner, "The Meaning of the Last Supper," in *The Great Invitation and Other Sermons* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 122.

Is It Well With Your Family?

Thrust Statement: **God wants mothers who are devoted to Him to teach their children the things of God.**

Scripture Reading: **Luke 2:21-40; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Kings 4:8-26**

Today is a day in which countless thousands remember their mothers. One of the sweetest memories that anyone can have is the memory of a good mother. Many of you can remember her tucking you in bed, kissing you goodnight, preparing your meals, keeling by your bedside and praying with you, reading Bible stores to you as she prepared you for bed, and ministering to you through a night of sickness. This message focuses on three pericopes (**Luke 2:21-40; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Kings 4:8-26**). The first story is about the parents of Jesus taking Him to the temple for circumcision according to the Law of Moses. The second Scripture reference is about Timothy's mother and grandmother. The third story is about the Shunammite woman and her encounter with Elisha. The major focus of the message surrounds three questions asked by Elisha to the mother.

Jesus Presented in the Temple

Even though one does not know the age of Jesus' mother, nevertheless, one readily observes that she was a woman in whom God found delight. Luke writes: "The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you'" (**Luke 1:28**)[1] Again, he records for the "most excellent Theophilus" (**1:3**) another insightful remark from the angel Gabriel (**1:26**): "But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God'" (**1:30**). Why did God find such favor with this young woman? Surely she must have been a very faithful follower of the teachings of Moses and the prophets. One such example, which illustrates her desire to follow the instructions from the Lord is found in her taking Jesus on the eighth day to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses (**2:21-24**).

The angel Gabriel revealed to Mary that one of her relatives, Elizabeth, was pregnant. Again, one meets a family that is devoted to God. Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, also officiated in the Temple as a priest of God (**1:8-10**). Upon Mary's entrance into the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Luke says that the baby—John the Baptist—leaped in Elizabeth's womb (**1:40**). Following this episode, one reads about Mary's song in which she extols the greatness and wonder of it all (**1:46-55**). The one thing that moves one with awe relates to the words that Mary pulls together in order to express the mercy of God upon her and Elizabeth: "His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation" (**1:50**). This insightful comment lays bare the devotion that Mary and Elizabeth had for their Lord.

Even thought the parents of Jesus lived in Galilee during his childhood, still they would go to Jerusalem every year to the Feast of the Passover (**2:41**). This trip from Galilee to Jerusalem is about sixty miles. Yet this distance did not keep them from making this long trip to observe the Feast of the Passover. Surely, the parents of Jesus followed the words of Moses to the children of Israel:

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. [a] 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (**Deuteronomy 6:4-9**).

It is reasonable to assume that Mary as well as Joseph followed the instructions given by Moses to Jesus and their other children—James, Joseph, Simon, Judas, and His sisters (**Matthew 13:55-56**). Luke also records that following the baptism of Jesus and His temptation by Satan that He went to Nazareth where He had been brought up and had taught in their synagogues (**Luke 4:14-15**). The significant thing about this scenario is the statement: "and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom" (**4:16**). Surely, Jesus attended the synagogues as a small child. Both Joseph and Mary would have taught Jesus about the things of God as commanded by Moses.

As one peruses the lives of Mary and Elizabeth, one conjectures about how the mothers of today would measure up to the devotion exhibited by these two women. What kind of a mother are you? Is your spiritual life such that you create within your children a desire for the holy? Do you take your children to church? Do you read the Word of God to them? Do you teach them to love the Lord God with all their hearts and with all their minds and with all their souls? Do you impress the things of God upon your children? Do you talk about the things of God when you sit in your homes? Do you talk about the things of God when you drive down the road? Do you talk about the things of God when you lie down at night and when you awake the next morning? Where is God in your life and the life of your children? Do you, too, desire to be a godly mother in the raising of your children?

Timothy's Mother and Grandmother

In Paul's last letter (**2 Timothy**) to Timothy, he reminds him to remember the words taught him by his mother and grandmother from infancy. Paul writes:

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, [15] and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (**2 Timothy 3:14-15**).

Paul credits the faith that Timothy possesses as having a direct association with his grandmother and mother. Paul begins this Epistle with the following comments: "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also" (**1:5**). Are you a grandmother? Are you a mother? If so, can your children or grandchildren say that you are a woman of faith in Christ Jesus? Paul's words to Titus are also appropriate for this Mother's Day. Listen to Paul as he instructs Titus about older women and their responsibilities in teaching younger women:

> Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. [4] Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (**Titus 2:3-5**).

Again, one must ask: What kind of mother are you? Do you love your husband and children? Are you like Lois, the grandmother of Timothy? Are you like Eunice, the mother of Timothy? How do you respond to the following three questions asked by Elisha, a prophet of God: "Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?'" (**2 Kings 4:26**). The *New Kings James* renders the Hebrew this way: "*Is it* well with you? *Is it* well with your husband? *Is it* well with the child?'"[2] These three questions should be answered by every mother. If one were to condense these three questions into one question, perhaps, the summary would be: "Is it well with your family?"

Is It Well With Your Family?

As one reads and rereads the story of the Shunammite's son and Elisha, one discovers a story that is full of meaning for every mother and father living today (**2 Kings 4:37**). Hopefully, a careful reading and reflection upon this story will bring home to mothers a true concern for their children. Even though this message is primarily focused upon mothers, nevertheless, one can draw conclusions that should awaken every father's attention, too; that is to say, the three questions asked by Elisha to the Shunammite woman: "Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child? (**4:26**). Do you mothers and fathers spend time with your children? Frequently, mothers and fathers labor under the stress of the workplace and do not have time for their children, even in the evenings or their day off. Frequently small children wish to share their experiences with their mothers and with their fathers when they return home, but the response by many parents is: "Not now, honey, I'm busy, go watch television."

But "not now" never comes around. If not "now," when? If parents fail to communicate when their children are small, it will be too late when children come in as teenagers with "glassy eyes" from drugs or alcohol. Perhaps, at this late date in their lives, you respond by saying, "We need to sit down and talk." But the time is too late. Love has passed you and the child by. There are many encounters in life that can break one's heart, but there is nothing that can break one's heart like the loss of a child. Parents can lose their children due to broken relationships. Christian mothers and fathers can lose their children by failure to build strength of character by spending time with them. These comments bring the story of the well-to-do-woman of Shunem (**4:8**) and her journey to see Elisha (**4:22-26**) to the hearts of every mother.

Elisha and a Mother's Love

Elisha, a prophet of the Lord, spent much time in the land proclaiming the Word of the Lord. This woman, devoted to the Lord, would invite Elisha to stay in her home for a meal (**4:8**). She realized that this man was different from other men. In other words, she came to the realization that this man was "a holy man of God" (**4:9**). Whereupon, she persuaded her husband to build an extra room onto their home and furnish this room with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp (**4:10**). How should modern women and men react to individuals whose lives today are dedicated to preaching the Word of God and to prayer for the people of God? Mothers and fathers do you possess this kind of devotion for the servants of God?

Because of her kindness and devotion, Elisha wanted to know if he could do anything for her. The author of the **Book of Kings** reports the following comments by Elisha:

> One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. [12] He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite." So he called her, and she stood before him. [13] Elisha said to him, "Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?'" She replied, "I have a home among my own people" (**4:11-13**).

Elisha still wanted to do something for her. As Elisha reflected upon this woman, he said to Gehazi, his servant: "'What can be done for her?' Elisha asked. Gehazi said, 'Well, she has no son and her husband is old'" (**4:14**). Following this conversation with Gehazi, he called for the Shunammite woman and said:

> Then Elisha said, "Call her." So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. [16] "About this time next year," Elisha said, "you will hold a son in your arms." "No, my lord," she objected. "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God!" [17] But the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her (**4:15-17**).

Elisha said to the woman what every woman desires that is barren. One can almost feel the anguish this woman feels as she pleads with him not to mislead her: "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God!" (**4:16**). Yes, the following year she held a

baby in her arms. If one has experienced a birth in the family, one can remember the joy and excitement for the baby. As the mother holds the new born baby, one can observe the joy that radiates her face. Yes, children are a heritage from the Lord. There is nothing that can create such joy in the lives of mothers and fathers as little children.

Well, a little boy or girl is born and everyone lives happily ever after. Right? No. Life, unfortunately, is not always that way. This author (Dallas Burdette) still remembers the death of his first daughter (Rebecca) who died in January 1963. Also, I remember the birth of my grandson Elijah Johnson (February 25, 1997). I can still remember the joy in my daughter's eyes as she held her little son. But things did not go well. On the sixteenth day of August in the year 2000, Elijah went to be with the Lord. My daughter Rachael held his lifeless body for at least an hour before the doctor took his dead body away. I have related these two stories to set the stage for the broken heart of the Shunammite woman who, too, lost her son that God gave her.

One day, this young man, went to visit his father in the field (**4:18**). While there, he told his father that his head hurt: "My head! My head!' he said to his father" (**4:19**). He was taken home, not by his father, but by one of his servants (**4:19-20**). Then, she, like any mother, took the child in her lap and comforted him. This is not the end of the story; the boy died (**4:20**). Immediately, she sent word to her husband to send one of his servants and a donkey so she could go to see the "man of God" (**4:22**). The mother did not tell the father of the child's death (**4:23**). When the father inquired as to why she wanted to go and see the prophet, she replied, "It's all right" (**4:23**). When Elisha saw her coming, he asked: "Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?" (**4:26**).

Mothers, how do you respond to the first question "Is it well with you?" (KJV). Even though Elisha had a particular reason for asking this question, still, one should ask himself/herself this same question in relationship to one's spiritual life with one's children. If mothers do not present themselves as examples of good morals and good character, then the rest of the land goes down the tube with her. As the mothers go, so goes the society. Children live out their lives as they see them reflected in their mothers and fathers. Since this sermon is exploring primarily mothers, one must focus upon the role model that mothers play in their children's spiritual maturity. What kind of a mother are you in your devotion to God? What kind of a mother are you in your church attendance on Sundays? What kind of a mother are you in the language your children hear? What kind of a mother are you in the reading of God's Word? Will your children call you blessed in later life? If not, why not?

The second question asked by Elisha concerns the husband—"Is your husband all right?" As one reflects upon this story, one cannot help but observe that when the boy got sick, the father asked one of his servants to take the boy to his mother (**4:18-20**). One cannot help but wonder if the father was too busy to fool with his sick son. If parents would look around, they would hear their children crying out for their moms and dads. "Dad, my head! My head! Father, my heart! My heart! Dad, my soul! My soul! And what do fathers do? They just keep on working. The following is a true story about a young man about to be sentenced to the penitentiary. The judge had known this young man from childhood; he also was well acquainted with his father who was a famous legal scholar and the author of an exhaustive study on "The Law of Trust." This is the story:

The judge asked the young man, “Do you remember your father?” “I remember him well, your honor,” came the reply. Then trying to probe the offender’s conscience, the judge said, “As you are about to be sentenced and as you think of your wonderful dad, what do you remember most clearly about him?” There was a pause. Then the judge received an answer he had not expected. “I remember when I went to him for advice. He looked up at me from the book he was writing and said, “Run along, boy; I’m busy!” When I went to him for companionship, he turned me away, saying “Run along, son; this book must be finished!” Your honor, you remember him as a great lawyer. I remember him as a lost friend. The magistrate muttered to himself, “Alas! Finished the book, but lost the boy!”

CONCLUSION

Mothers and fathers should awaken to the responsibility that God has placed upon their shoulders. Moms, Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with your child? Have you observed the devotion of the Shunammite woman to her son? She was not about to give up on her son without a fight. Yes, he had died in her arms, but she refused to let him go. There appears to be a great contrast between the mother’s reaction and the father’s response to his sick son. One cannot help but wonder why the father did not pick up his own sick child. Did he have more important things to do? Hopefully this Mother’s Day message will cause each mother, each grandmother, each father, and each grandfather to reevaluate their relationship to their children and grandchildren.

Since children generally live out their lives as they see life reflected in their parents, mothers and fathers should live out their lives in such a way that they will instill in them a love for God and His holiness. Children need to feel the touch of their mother’s love and hand. They need to hear words of encouragement about their accomplishments. Children need to be reminded that they are a gift from the Lord to their parents. Let them know that they belong to God. Do you put your children down or do you tell them that they are children of God? Does this praise make a difference in your child’s life? Listen to the following story told my Dr. Fred Craddock about how the life of a mother and the words of a preacher changed a young boy’s self-confidence.

He tells the story of how he and his wife were vacationing in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. One night while they were dining, they noticed an older, white-haired gentleman going around and shaking hands. Craddock tells how he whispered to his wife, “I hope he doesn’t come over here.” But the man came over and inquired as to where they were from. “Oklahoma,” responded Craddock. Again, the friendly man asked, “What do you do for a living?” Craddock said, “I teach homiletics at the graduate seminary of Phillips University.” “Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I’ve got a story to tell you, said Ben Hooper.

As Hooper began his story, he told Craddock that he was born out of wedlock. He related to Craddock that his mother wasn’t married when he was born, so he had a pretty hard time. He recounted how that at school the children would say things to him that cut deeply. “What was worse,” he said, “was going to town on Saturday and feeling like every eye in town was burning a hole through me, wondering just who my father was.” And as he continued his story, he said, “When I was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to our church. I would always go in late and slip out early. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast I got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. I could feel

every eye in the church on me. Just about the time I got to the door I felt a big hand on my shoulder. I looked up and the preacher was looking right at me. 'Who are you, son?' he asked. I felt this big weight coming down on me. It was like a big black cloud. Even the preacher was putting me down. But as he looked down at me, studying my face, he began to smile a big smile of recognition. 'Wait a minute!' he said. 'I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God.' With that he slapped me across the rump and said, 'boy, you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.'"

After the man left, Craddock remembered his study of Tennessee history that on two occasions, the people of Tennessee elected two different individuals to the state's highest office—Governor of Tennessee—that were born out of wedlock. One of them was a man named Ben Hooper. Even though his father abandoned him, one can thank God that he had a mother who was devoted to him. Are you devoted to your children? Are you seeking to implant into their hearts a love for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Are you telling your children that they are children of God? Are you teaching them to put God first in their lives? Are you telling them that one must love God with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their minds? Are you setting forth an example for your children to follow? Will they say, later in life, my mother was a great Christian mother? Mothers, will your children call you blessed in later life? If not, why not?

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[1]All Scripture citations are from *the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), unless stated otherwise.

[2]*The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982).

A New Year: A Time to Remember God's Grace

Thrust Statement: **Remembering God's grace brings about a change in one's lifestyle.**

Scripture Reading: **2 Corinthians 13:5**

As one approaches this New Year, this is a time to reexamine one's relationship to God. Paul's message, as found in **2 Corinthians 13:5**, is designed to invite individuals to look into their hearts and to search themselves so that they may discover what is in their hearts. The year 2004 is a time for reflection on God's calling individuals away from themselves and for evaluation of one's self-preoccupation with one's own interests. Hopefully, an examination of this text will encourage Christians to focus on two things: (1) self-examination of one's daily walk with God, and (2) reflection upon God's grace in and through His Son Jesus.

Just a casual glance at Paul's words in this passage penetrates into the very soul of any individual who reaches out to God for salvation. Paul goes right to the very center of one's own ego and says: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test" (**2 Corinthians 13:5**)? [1] This text, at first glance, seems to draw one away from the doctrine of justification by faith. This self-examination is concerned about glorifying God as a result of His grace extended to those who focus their attention upon Christ for deliverance from God's wrath.

Apparently, some of the Corinthians had failed to understand the implications of this message of God's Way of salvation by grace in and through Christ. A brief reading of this epistle reveals that some failed to allow a fundamental change in their day-to-day behavior, a change that the Gospel demands. In this brief verse, Paul desires that God's people should apprehend Jesus Christ, but, at the same time, he also wishes that God's Gospel should take into custody everyone's life to His glory and honor through good works. Emil Brunner comments on **2 Corinthians 13:5** this way:

> Christ is indeed the theme of this text too. This self-examination is concerned with faith, of course with faith in the grace of God which alone saves us, and its object is to discover whether we have truly understood this preaching and made this message the fundamental inspiration of our lives.[2]

Do you realize that Christ Jesus is in you? Who is Christ? What is His identity? The Holy Spirit wants the disciples of Jesus Christ to testify as to His identity—the Savior of the world (**John 15:26-27**). How does faith come about? Faith in Jesus comes about through the proclamation of the Gospel (**Romans 10:14-17**). Jesus Christ longs to dwell in the hearts of His people, not just their minds or memories (**Revelation 3:20**). An examination of one's faith should result in amazement and marvel at the rich love of God in sending His Son to die for sinful humanity. As you reflect upon God's mercy, are you spellbound in wonder and struck with astonishment and driven to bow in worship to His matchless love? Jesus invites everyone to open his or her heart and let Him in. Have you failed to devote your life to Jesus? Have you examined your life? Have you failed the test?

What is your faith all about? What does your belief amount to? Does your belief in Christ make a difference in your life? Is your life the same today as it was before you put your faith in Him? Can you say that you are a different person as a result of you're faith? Does your faith issue forth in gratitude for His redemption (**Colossians 3:16**)? Is your faith very deep? Are you aware that there is One above you? Do you allow God's Word to speak to you today? Do you remember God's grace through Jesus Christ? Paul writes to Timothy to remember Jesus Christ:

> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory (**2 Timothy 2:8-10**).

Do you reflect upon the deepest foundations of your faith? Why does God's love no longer radiate from your face? Why is there so little warmth toward God's people? Why did Paul write as he did to the Corinthians? Are you praying that this verse (**2 Corinthians 13:5**) will sink into your heart and stand fast? Remember, that Jesus Christ is given to those who believe as "righteousness" from God (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). If one wishes to exemplify Christ in his or her daily walk with God, one must wrap himself or herself in the grace of God in Jesus Christ. When one allows himself or herself to be taken into God's New Covenant, one must remain loyal to it. When one is without Christ, one is in darkness. When one is with Christ, one is in light. If awe for God dies, you die. Is your faith very deep? Is your faith simply lodged in your understanding and not in your heart?

As you approach this New Year, is there meaning to your life? Is there anything worthwhile in your life? Today, the world is full of individuals to whom there is no meaning in life? When one discovers that his or her life is a vacuum, one does not know God. When one does not know God, there is no eternal purpose by which one can shape his or her life. One simply drifts in the sea of nothingness. When one's life is oriented toward the Eternal, when one's thoughts are upon the kingdom of God, when one's life is committed to Jesus, and when one's life is filled with assurance of salvation, then one's faith is able to overcome the philosophy of despair. When one's life is filled with God, one

does not need to turn to alcohol, one does not need to turn to drugs, and one does not need to turn to illicit sex. Yes, when one knows God, one knows that his or her journey is not void; one knows the goal set before him or her—eternal life in and through Jesus.

When the hope of eternal life fades, one's sense of the holy and one's sense of awe disappears. Without a belief in the following words of Jesus, one sinks into despair: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (**John 11:25**). When one affirms that he or she believes in the resurrection of the dead and of life in the world to come, one does not melt away into emptiness. Life has importance and substance. When one knows Christ and the power of His resurrection, one never looks at the world as he or she did before meeting Christ. Listen to Paul as he seeks to capture the true meaning of life:

> But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. [8] What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. [10] I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (**Philippians 3:7-11**).

A belief in the resurrection of Jesus results in one becoming what Christ is. Is Christ formed in you? Paul calls attention to the necessity of allowing Christ to mold one's life: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, [20] how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you" (**Galatians 4:19-20**)! Are you living in Christ and is Christ living in you? To live in Christ is to live in eternity. God from eternity predetermined that those who receive the Son of God receive eternal life (**Ephesians 1:3-14**). If one wishes to receive eternal life, one must know the Son who is from eternity (**John 3:36**).

What does it mean to you to say, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection"? Did Paul just want intellectual knowledge about Christ, or did he want an intimate knowledge of Christ? Paul did not just want to know about Christ, but rather he wanted to personally know Him? What about yourself? Do you want to know about Him or know Him? William Barclay captures the essence of what it really means to know Him:

> To know Christ is not to be skilled in any theoretical or theological knowledge; it is to know him with such intimacy that in the end we are as united with him as we are with those whom we love on earth and that, as we share their experiences, so we also share his.[3]

What does God's grace mean to you? Has God's grace had an effect upon your lifestyle? God's grace is seen in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is through the resurrection of Jesus that one knows that he or she has eternal life and has access to it. One can say with confidence than one can have hope of eternal life in and through Jesus. One must die with Christ the Crucified One, and you must be resurrected with Christ the

resurrected One. God, in His wisdom, designed the means whereby sinful humanity can participate in the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. Günther Bornkamm explains baptism this way:

In that Christ takes his own into his death and his life, he thus places them together with him in this activity. He separates them from sin and gives to their life out of death a constant direction toward God. Already in Rom. 5:1ff. Paul has shown how the believers are now initially activated through justification and the pact of peace: the Spirit moves their hearts through the love of God, which is poured into our hearts (5:5). And then comes the praise of hope, indeed praise not only in the middle of trouble but even because of affliction. This new activity means "endurance"—"character"—"hope" (Rom 5.4). "I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own!" (Phil.3.12). "Dead to sin, alive to God"—that is no attained condition but the release of life, and now genuine activity for the first time. Paul makes this clear in Rom.6.15ff. By describing liberation from sin not only as separation from its power but immediately as incorporation in a new relationship of obedience, as a service in the new being of the Spirit (7.6). The new conduct is thus already included with the new being; it is the release of a life open to God, now truly turned toward the future for the first time.[4]

Paul expresses this participation in **Romans 6** as he reminds the Romans of their baptism (**Romans 6:1-14**). If one believes in Him, this belief demands repentance, or conversion, from the old nature to a new person in Christ. Have you discarded the works of the flesh? In other words, have you disrobed yourself of the willful, self-seeking, prideful, and godless behavior of your former way of life? When one repents, the old person must die. Your old will and desires must die. Your pride must be destroyed. In Christian baptism, Jesus takes one who believes into His death and life. When one is buried with His Lord in baptism, one is dead to sin, but alive to God. In baptism, God has opened a new life. As one reflects upon baptism, one comes away with the idea that baptism represents a turning point between sin and God and between the old and the new aeon (age). What does it mean to you to say, "I believe in Jesus Christ"? Paul grabs hold of the very essence of one's new life in Christ with its implications to the Romans:

> What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (**Romans 6:15-18**).

CONCLUSION

When God calls men and women as partners into His kingdom, He desires their co-operation in the whole range of human activity (**Romans 12:1-2**). Christians are not made for freedom *from* God, but for freedom *in* God. This new allegiance renders one trustworthy and responsible and free—free to serve righteousness, not sin. In Christ, one is no longer his or her own master. Paul drives home this point in the first part of his first letter to Corinth: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is

in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; [20] you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**). Christians bow in awe at God's forgiveness of sins.

Even though outsiders may not fully understand forgiveness, every Christian thanks God daily for forgiveness. All believers thank God for His intervention to bring about salvation in and through His Son. It is in this vein that Paul recounts the very essence of God's Good News about salvation for sinful humanity:

> It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. [31] Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord"[b] (**1:30-31**).

This challenge of self-examination by Paul in **2 Corinthians 13:5** takes one back to the very heart of his message of salvation in and through Christ. The Gospel of Jesus offers hope. The Gospel of Christ alone offers hope of eternal life. But it offers eternal life at a price—belief in Jesus as Lord. It is self-evident that death is the end of one's physical life, but, at the same time, one can say that there is hope beyond the grave. In other words, the Gospel of Jesus extends a hope greater than anything that this world has to offer. To escape God's wrath, one must accept and confess Jesus as Lord. Listen to Paul, once more, as he goes right to the heart of salvation:

> But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,"[e] that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: [9] That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. [11] As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame"[f] (**Romans 10:8-11**).

Do you want to be one of His disciples? Do you want to renounce your own rights and will? If you are willing to do that, you can know for sure that Jesus is your resurrection and life. Again, the words of Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (**John 11:25**). Christians are conscious of this truth. As a result of this understanding, they have a purpose by which life can be shaped. Believers know why they are in the world, and they also know that they are not journeying into a void of meaninglessness.

Christians know that they are to love God and their neighbors. This kind of mindset is woven into the very texture of one's everyday walk with God. When one believes in God, the Father of Jesus Christ, one knows that his or her life is not governed by chance, but by the will of God. J. H. Oldham quotes the following succinct observation about the new life in Christ from Archbishop of York:

> In Christ new life broke into the world; He is the beginning and the pledge of its redemption. The church, the company of those who believe in Him, is the salt of the earth, a new leaven working in the world and history, seeking to permeate these realms and renew them by the power of the new life. The Christian

> dividing line does not run between the sphere of religion and the sphere of the secular. In the heart and center of the common life of the world it divides those who live this common life in the power of faith, seeking to transform and renew it from the roots up, and those who live and act in unbelief, that is in self-centeredness and pride. . . . The destiny of the Church, the deepest secret of its life, is to die continually in the redemptive service of the world and to rise again in a reborn natural and historical—that is to say, secular—life.[5]

Do you really and truly believe? If so, then you will not drift like lost souls. If you believe, your soul is anchored in His love—the One who controls the world. Can you say the following words of Paul: "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (**Romans 14:8**)? Do you remember God's grace in your daily life? How is one saved? Is it by works or by grace? Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, writes:

> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).

In conclusion, as one sums up this message about remembering God's grace, one must ask himself or herself if it is worthwhile to believe? This message about remembering God's grace has labored the point that it is only in faith that life takes on real value and authentic meaning to assist one through the toils of life. Faith in Jesus is the only consolation that one finds in life as well as in death. Are you in the faith? Have you examined your faith? Is it active or is it dead? Pay attention once more to the words of Paul:

> Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? 6 And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. 7 Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. 8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. 9 We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection. 10 This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down (**2 Corinthians 13:5-10**).

[1]All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

[2] Emil Brunner, "Self-examination: 2 Corinthians 13:5" in *The Great Invitation and Other Sermons* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), 165-66. I am indebted to Emil Brunner for the genesis of this message: A New Year: Remembering God's Grace.

[3]William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 64-65.

[4] Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), 80.

b Jer. 9:24

e Deut. 30:14

f Isaiah 28:16

[5] J. H. Oldham, *Life Is Commitment* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 90.

Journey Through Life

Dallas Burdette: January 3, 1998

Thrust statement: We have embarked upon a momentous expedition -- traveling a road on which the Lord has set us in His purpose.

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 30:19

Do you ever stop and think about your life as a journey? Are you conscious that you are on a journey now? You have either chosen to take the broad way that leads to eternal damnation or you have chosen the narrow way that leads to eternal life. I ask you today to decide which road you are on. Everyone is on a pilgrimage through life. If we are Christians, then, we are no longer enslaved and captive to sin but are on our final destination of eternal salvation. Since this is so, I encourage you to renew your commitment to the new life in Jesus Christ. Whether you are Christian or sinner, I appeal to you to make a resolution to serve the living God with all your heart, with all your strength, and with all your mind.

As we begin a New Year, I implore you to meditate upon the words of Joshua as he approaches the end of his life.

> "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD**" (**Joshua 24:14-15**).

This sermon emphasizes the exercises of the will, the heart, and the mind, which things are necessary for the Christian to appropriate the redemption given to us in our Lord. This exhortation wrestles with one of the most troublesome theological difficulties of the Christian faith: the relationship of our works, as men and women already redeemed by the cross and resurrection, to our salvation. Do we still have something to do? Can Christians accept or reject God's grace through their life style? Can one's continuing unfaithfulness and disobedience cancel one's salvation?

Whatever answer you give, that answer must be measured by the teaching of God's Word. There is much in the New Testament that leads one to believe that the benefits of salvation in Christ can be lost. For instance, Paul addresses the Galatians with these stern words: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (**Galatians 5:4**). Holy Scripture abounds with exhortations to faithfulness. Paul charged Timothy:

> But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses (**1 Timothy 6:11-12**).

Many Christians rely on what Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace." It is not uncommon for Christians to relish in the benefits of redemption made available by God through Jesus Christ, without responding to God's grace through good works – the number is legion. Our indifference becomes apparent when we assure ourselves that God accepts us even when we disregard His Gospel and His teachings, or when we assume that we can love God and at the same time hate our brother or spouse or acquaintance with impunity. Apparently this attitude existed in Paul's day also. He left Titus on the island of Crete so that he might "straighten out what was left unfinished" (**Titus 1:5**). In this epistle to Titus, Paul deals with proper conduct for Christians, those who had been saved by God's grace. Paul grounds right conduct upon what God has done for us through Jesus. He writes:

> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you (**Titus 2:11-15**).

This sermon proclaims that there is a response that must be made to God's mercy. We must never forget that God is working in us, in spite of all the trials and tribulations that we undergo. For instance, while Paul languished in a Roman jail, he, nevertheless, could write the Philippians that

> As you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing (**Philippians 2:12-16**).

Let us return to the Scripture reading in the beginning of our message. You recall that Moses admonished the Israelites to respond to the blessings of God. When Moses made his final appeal, he was one hundred and twenty years old. He offered them life or death. He vigorously pleaded with them,

> See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (**Deuteronomy 30:15-20**).

Israel had reached her destination at a moment in time between bondage and a future fruitful life. She had now moved in a direction in her pilgrimage away from enslavement toward her salvation. To some extent, this is also a description of our own day to day lives. At times our lives can seem pointless, unimportant, and insignificant – as if our lives are measured out in "coffee spoons at home, or in production figures at the office." But the truth of the matter is that we have embarked upon a momentous expedition, traveling a road on which the Lord God has set us in His purpose. And we got started on this journey by being rescued out of slavery through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Prior to our conversion, we were enslaved to the power of death. And, try as we will to escape its clutches, we never can outrun its grasp or loose its cold fingers from encircling our lives and the lives of all whom we love. All one has to do is just walk to the cemetery to visit the graves of those who have preceded them in death. Death still hangs over the human race like some great phantom from the beginning of our first disobedience. The words of the Hebrew writer still ring in our ears: "man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (**Hebrew 9:27**). We never can escape the fangs of death, but God accomplished this feat for us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On that Easter morning, as we sometimes refer to the resurrection, death's tyranny was broken. There, in the resurrection, human flesh and blood was delivered from the grave's captivity and death lost its power to claim humanity as slaves. This wonderful news of victory over death is what caused Paul to shout:

> "Death has been swallowed up in victory."
> "Where, O death, is your victory?
> Where, O death, is your sting?"
> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
> But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord
> Jesus Christ (**1 Corinthians 15:54-57**).

A new power invaded history – God became flesh. John, the apostle, speaks of this manifestation in glowing terms: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (**John 1:14**). This One who came from the Father was "**full** of grace and truth." Jesus reveals to Nicodemus that

> "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God" (John 3:16-21).

On another occasion Jesus responded to the Jews who tried to kill Him: "just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (John 5:21). To these same Jews, He also said, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (**John 5:28-29**). God has come intruding into our own personal lives, through Jesus Christ, changing our state of affairs. He retrieved us. He sanctified us. He purchased us back. In Christ our Lord, He claimed us as His own. And so the road we travel is now His road, leading from redemption toward the future. This is the reason that Paul could write: "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). Paul says it is because of Him that men can boast, not because of our works. "This righteousness" writes Paul, "from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (**Romans 3:22**).

We as Christians often deceive ourselves into thinking that because Christ died and rose from the dead that we have nothing else to do. We, for some reason, think that we will simply drift into the benefits of our salvation. But a word of caution is pertinent here in our journey. Jesus encouraged His disciples to "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (**Matthew 7:13-14**). What does "only a few find it" mean to you? Having been redeemed by the cross and the empty tomb, we can still fail to realize the full benefits of our redemption.

Can you imagine the benefits to our society if Christians were clothed with the "fruit of the Spirit"? What are they? Paul enumerates them as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (**Galatians 5:22-23**). Paul also reminds those in Corinth to live godly lives. He, through the Holy Spirit, captures the mind of God in His demands upon the redeemed.

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.** For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. (**2 Corinthians 5:17—6:2**).

We live in an age and a society where anything goes. If it feels good do it. But this is not God's way. God says, "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (**Romans 6:2**). Since we are dead to sin, then, Paul exhorts,

> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace (**Romans 6:12-14**).

Conclusion

In concluding our sermon -- Journey Through Life -- I encourage each of you to begin to love once more as God loves you. We need to forgive others as God has forgiven us through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. In this journey, we are to "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (**Romans 15:7**). To love Him means to wipe out the evil past in our closeness with those around us – the past bitterness you have against your spouse, the past falling-out you have against a relative, the past altercation you had with a friend that has shattered the togetherness between you. To love God means to love those whom God loves. To love God means to care for those whom God cares. There are a lot of people in the world who irritate our sensibilities. There are people who are totally obnoxious to us. Since we have embarked upon a momentous expedition, traveling a road on which the Lord has set us in His purpose, then, I encourage you to reflect time and again upon the words of Isaiah:

> And a highway will be there;
> it will be called the Way of Holiness.
> The unclean will not journey on it;
> it will be for those who walk in that Way;
> wicked fools will not go about on it (**Isaiah 35:8**).

Preached:

Grassy Church of Christ (Arab, Alabama), January 4, 1998, 11am (service)

Christ: God's Answer to the Problem of Evil

Thrust Statement: **The Eternal God speaks His last word to humanity through Christ.**

Scripture Reading: **1 Corinthians 2:1-2**

The world reeks with evil. One cannot read the newspapers or listen to television without bombardment of the atrocities committed by nations or individuals. Names such as Herod the Great, Nero, Bloody Mary I (a Catholic queen in a protestant country), Ivan the Terrible, Josep Stalin, Adolph Hitler, Mao Tse-Tung, Pol Pot, Idi Amin (Muslim)[1], Kim Sung Il (north Korea's Stalin), Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein (Muslim), Uday Hussein (Muslim), and Zarqawi (Muslim) are identified as "evil" personified. In addition to these leaders, one also recalls the names of individuals who represent evil in its most chilling form: Al Capone (St Valentine's Day Massacre), John Gotti, Ted Bundy (killed a many as thirty-six girls in four states), Jeffrey Dahmer (killed at least sixteen), Bonny Parker and Clyde Barrow, and Jim Jones. President Bush spoke of certain nations as the axis of evil. Why does not God intervene and stop such evil? If God is all-powerful, why does God allow such atrocities?

There is not an easy solution to the above questions. Perhaps, the answers lie in life, not logic. It is life that speaks the language of truth in the world of humanity. The Christian finds his or her answers in the knowledge of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Jesus the Son of God. Christ is God's answer to the problem of evil. Is God all-powerful? God's omnipotence (power or control) is at the heart of this question. The question of God's omnipotence lies at the forefront of the question of good and evil. Is God omnipotent? If so, can He not stop evil? First, the question of omnipotence does not imply power to establish illogically what shall be possible. In other words, God cannot do what is absurd, or illogical. God cannot make a false statement true. He cannot make virtue a vice or a circle a square. He cannot cause anything to exist and not to exist at the same time. He cannot destroy Himself. Omnipotence cannot mean the ability to bring

about a contradiction. It can only mean the capacity to do what is consistent with God's nature and perfection.

Evil in God's World

Why does God not get rid of evil? If God stepped in and eliminated evil, He would have to rework the entire nature of men and women; they would then be robots, no longer human. What is possible in the world of sin and grace depends on what God is. Eternal truth is not prior to God; truth is the very nature of God. God has a character. God entered time and is known for what He is and what He does in history. God is "I am that I am." When one speaks of existence, one can say that to exist is to be this and not that, even for the God of all creation. For one to be able to defy God is a far greater proof of God's omnipotence than a perfect robot, which could only act in blind obedience. It is the power to withhold obedience to God that makes one's obedience worthwhile. If one can only act in blind obedience, then freedoms of will ceases to exist and one simply becomes a machine. Freedom to choose is proof of God's love. God in His omnipotence treats His creatures, not as puppets on a string, but as persons.

One is ever conscious that there is gigantic power of evil in this universe. God deals with evil in the Incarnation. Christians can overcome evil with Good. God deals with evil through Christ. It is in the Cross that God speaks His last word to men and women. Not only is the Cross essential to God's dealing with evil, but also the Resurrection of Jesus. The religion of Islam denies both the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the Gospel of God to a dying world, a world of evil. The Resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian faith; it is the Christian faith. The Resurrection is not an event that is attached to the end of the story in order to create a happy ending. The Resurrection is from the foundation of the world. These events constitute the Gospel. The crucifixion and Resurrection go together. Paul writes to the Corinthians about the very heart of the Gospel as God's means of salvation:

> Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. [2] By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. [3] For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).

God's Answer to the Problem of Evil: Jesus Christ

The religions of the world do not accept this Gospel, which includes Muslims. Islam denies the Gospel of God. Muslims teach salvation through works, not God's grace. The only hope for humanity and peace is the acceptance of the One who is the Prince of Peace. God deals with evil in and through the Gospel. The Gospel is Good News for the whole world. It is Good News that God has made available a means of salvation based upon faith in the finished work of Christ, not one's meritorious works. The only way human nature will change is exposure to the Gospel of God, which introduction brings about a change in one's ethical behavior in one's daily walk with God and his neighbors. Where the principles of the True Gospel are not proclaimed, one discovers unbelievable carnage committed against people. Where the principles of True Christianity are lacking,

one sees an increase of warfare against its inhabitants. One observes this mentality of no right or wrong in the daily reporting of the news coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan concerning the murder of individuals on a daily basis. Yet, this same mentality of "no concern" for life is rampant in the United States, especially among children, as well as adults, as a result of evolutionary philosophy and a diet of atheism.

One sees ungodly behavior among the radicals of the various countries that refuse to accept Christian principles. In the United States, the prisons are teeming with thousands who rejected the Gospel of God for their lives. If nations as well as individuals would submit themselves to the Prince of Peace, one would witness love, not hate. The love of Jesus is the only thing that can root out the principles of mischief among Islamic radicals in Iraq and the extremists of Afghanistan as well as other atheistic nations. Even though Islam recognizes Jesus as one of six prophets, nevertheless, they do not adhere to the teachings of Jesus. Without Jesus, one beholds the most pernicious venom instilled into one's society. It is only in and through Jesus that one can observe a society living in peace and love. Muslims reject both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Thus, they reject the teachings of Jesus about love. Christians must continue to share the Gospel with every world religion. Today, there are many former Muslims who have accepted Jesus as their savior.

It is not only in Iraq and Afghanistan that individuals need to know the true nature of the Gospel, but it is also needed in America. In fact, the whole world needs Jesus. It is true that this nation (America) does not oppress its people in the same way as one observes in Iraq and Afghanistan by extremists, but, at the same time, Christians practice a form of hate against other believers over doctrinal differences—differences that ought not to divide and create hate. If Christians are going to convert the world, they, themselves, must understand what the Gospel of God is. It is in this regard that Jesus prayed to the Father:

> My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, [21] that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (**John 17:20-21**).

Prerequisite for Evangelism: Unity Among God's People

If Christians are to reach the masses for Christ, believers must seek to fulfill the prayer of Jesus. The word *Gospel* is tossed to and fro by many well-meaning Christians in their zeal to be true to their understanding of the teachings of God as interpreted from the written Scriptures. The word *Gospel* has almost as many definitions as there are divisions within the various Christian communities. Since the word *Gospel* is not understood by many believers, this paper seeks to uncover the true meaning as employed by the New Testament writers. One's failure to grasp the real significance of the Gospel has resulted in multiple partitions within many Christian fellowships and a failure to reach the masses for Christ. Some Christians identify the Gospel as twenty-seven books called the New Testament. This list of classifications is almost ad infinitum. The Gospel is Good News about salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

This mistaken belief about the actual nature of the Gospel is the source of separation by many Christians, which misinterpretation about the very essence or heart of the Gospel has degenerated this once-united movement of God's family into warring

factions and distinctive sects that refuse fellowship with other believers. The end result of the current mindset among Christians is that when one's orthodoxy does not coincide with one's particular faction, the only alternative, at least according to some, is to carve up the body of Christ and form other so-called loyal groups. This author (Dallas Burdette) was associated with one such group (seventeen years) in the early part of his ministry. The following remarks appeared on the signboard in front of the church building: "The loyal church meets here." In other words, there was not another faithful church in the entire city of Montgomery, AL, except this one small odd group.

The Gospel: The Message of the Cross

The thrust of the essay is not to deal with the negative statements by many sincere believers, but rather to develop the positive nature of the biblical meaning of the word *Gospel* and its implications in evangelistic outreach to the world at large. The Gospel is God's answer to the problem of evil in the world. Hopefully, this paper will touch those who profess Christianity as well as Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah and the Islamic followers of Mohammed (AD 570-629), many of whom fail to acknowledge the ethical standards as taught by Jesus and participate in terrorist activities. Christians, as well as all people, need to recapture the core of Christianity—the Cross of Jesus and His resurrection. These two facts constitute the very heart of the message of salvation for men and women. It is through the Cross that God makes known His holiness and His love simultaneously. Forgiveness of sins is easily gained in other religions, but not so in Christianity. In Christianity, forgiveness is concretized in an historical event, namely, the Incarnation. Humanity deserves punishment, not forgiveness. With the advent of Christ, one understands that forgiveness can only take place as a real divine act. Divine law requires that sin should receive its corresponding penalty from God. There is a gulf between God and humanity. Men and women cannot construct the bridge between themselves and God. H. H. Farmer's words are worth citing at length in order to drive home the point of forgiveness as costly for God:

> The view that the divine forgiveness waits only upon penitence is sometimes criticized on the ground that it makes much forgiveness cheap and easy. The criticism cannot be admitted. On the contrary, it may be thought to rest on a rather cheap and easy and shallow view of sin and of its consequences in the human spirit. When you begin really to understand what sin is and what it does in and to the human person you begin to see that to bring a man to, and continually to renew in him, a really sincere and true penitence towards God is an infinitely difficult and costing task. It requires in fact, as I shall maintain, nothing less and nothing other than the total self-offering of the Saviour himself to God.[2]

In order to bridge this gap, God revealed Himself in Christ. The revelation of God is seen on the Cross. Revelation means that God has come to human beings. For God to come to men and women, God had to condescend and self-empty Himself, as it were, to come close to His creatures. In other words, He had to divest Himself of deity, at least in His external manifestation—His humanity. The author of Hebrews expresses the humanity of Jesus this way:

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that

by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for[f] the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (**Hebrews 2:14-18**).

The Gospel deals with redemption. To say that God comes to humankind is to say that God comes to meet His creatures where they are. God had to come to the level of flesh in order to meet with men and women. It is only at the Cross that one sees fully what it is that separates one from God. It is at the Cross that one perceives that he or she is no longer separated from God. Guilt is too great to be removed by forgiveness that is just pure and simple, that is to say, no atonement or punishment for sin. Forgiveness took the doing and dying of Jesus who is God's "mercy seat" for His grace toward sinners.

The Cross of Jesus: The Assurance of Divine Forgiveness

The Christian doctrine of forgiveness is based upon the fact of the atonement of Christ. The Personal Word (Jesus) comes from beyond the human sphere. Jesus is the Word from the other side, the Word from above. Jesus Himself constitutes the content of the Gospel. Jesus is of a different origin from His creatures; He is from above; his creatures are from below. Jesus told the religious leaders: "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world" (**John 8:23**). The Christ who came is the Gospel. In the Gospels, the Cross of Jesus is conceived as the self-offering of God. Only God can make this sacrifice for the sins of the human race. He alone can expiate and cover sin as if it had never been. It is God Himself who takes upon Himself suffering in order to atone for the sins of His creatures. It is God who does it; it is God who suffers. The sacrifice that reconciles one to God is not one's own act, but God's. The Gospel of Jesus signifies the great revolution in the religious world—God became flesh and died for His creatures (**John 1:1-4**). God deals with evil in and through His Son Jesus. Emil Brunner focuses on the message of the Cross as the assurance of divine forgiveness:

> Everything which tends to make us see the miracle of forgiveness as an incomprehensible miracle, as something which could never be expected, is good and necessary. God himself has provided the decisive safeguard. The cross of Jesus Christ is that event, within divine revelation, by which it is made impossible for us to take divine forgiveness lightly. This is the deepest reason why the message of the Cross is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block for the Jews. The message of the cross or rather the event itself is the divine medium by which forgiveness is given the full weight of the unhear-of, the incomprehensible and, seen from man's side, the impossible. But this does not happen as it were by a divine rhetoric but by a divine inward necessity; for in the message of the cross both are revealed as one: divine holiness, which is not mocked, and divine love as the unconditional will to communion.[3]

The Gospel is the Good News that God is with us. The Gospel is about Christ the Redeemer. As one approaches the word *Gospel*, it is not an inferior play upon words, so to

speak, to picture the Gospel in terms of the Cross. The question that every individual must answer is: what is the Gospel of Redemption? In response to this query, one can state emphatically that it is the Cross of Jesus. The Gospel is not an ideology; it is not some secular world-view; it is not a philosophy of life, but rather, the Gospel is about God's act of salvation in and through Jesus. A negative question helps to focus in on the import of the Gospel. For instance, what is it that one cannot leave out without altering the character and meaning of the Gospel? The answer is, the Cross of Jesus. With this understanding of redemption, one can understand why Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians focused so much on the Cross.

The Cross: An Act of God

The Cross was an act of God. Paul writes with precision as he sets forth the heart of his message of salvation: " For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (**1 Corinthians 1:18**).[4] The Cross of Christ is crucial, not only for the Gospel story, but for history itself. Is it any wonder that Paul writes: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (**2:2**). In the Cross, one observes that God tasted death for every person. The Cross is the decisive event in the history of the world. This happening in time changed the relations between God and the world. This occurrence was so powerful in the history of the world that one witnesses a change in the counting of years—from B.C to A.D. This change from B.C to A.D was no arbitrary device for numbering the years. This change confirms the conviction of the Christian community that the Cross of Jesus is the supreme reality of human existence. The Cross of the Messiah is the decisive center of the world. If not, where is it? If the Cross is not the crucial point of history, how can human history have any purpose or meaning?

If the Cross of Jesus did not happen, then the story of redemption, as related by Christians, is simply a fairytale and signifies nothing. If it is nothing more than a fable passed on from one generation to another, then the story as told in the Sacred Writings is ultimately meaningless. Is this story about Christ's crucifixion just simply one more fairytale in a catalogue of other stories passed on by storytellers? No! Since this story is true, it gives meaning to life itself. It is in Jesus that both men and women find an absolute and unalterable center of reference for importance to life. What does this central event in the history of humanity reveal? This crucifixion reveals two facts—both poles apart—that (1) Christ's death upon the Cross unfolds something that is altogether terrible and, at the same time, (2) reveals something that is altogether wonderful. One side of the Cross witnesses to the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the other side witnesses to the amazing wonder of God's forgiveness. As one reflects back upon the Cross, one sees the darkest point in the history of this world, and, at the same time, the most blinding light of glory—the antidote for the sins of mankind. There is a sense in which one can say that the victory of Satan is in reality his defeat.

One is confronted with the atrocities of the world on a daily basis. Yet, in the Cross, one is confronted with the real nature and meaning of evil. The Cross makes actual, as nothing else can do, the enormity of sin. In the Cross of Jesus, one observes sin acted out in all its naked blasphemy. The picture of sin is unutterably and heinously dark. Crucifixion, in and of itself, was common in the first century. Many individuals in the first century had had their naked flesh reduced to raw and bleeding strips. Not even the horsing

around of the soldiers for sport with Jesus is the critical point. Even though Jesus suffered excruciating agony through calculated torture—a torture of driving nails through His hands and feet into the crossbeam and the shaft—that still is not the significant and outstanding events of this death.

What made this crucifixion different from the other two crucified with Him on the same day? Thousands had been previously crucified. Not even the very fact that He was innocent is sufficient to elevate the Cross to the point found in the preaching of the apostles and the early church. The crucifixion of Christ is surrounded with the blood lust of the erratic crowd, the malicious cunning of priests, the professionally religious leaders, the disloyalty of one of His friends whose conscience was molted into silver, and another one of His close associates, in the face of danger, renounced with curses of any knowledge of the One called Christ. The grief Jesus suffered upon the Cross was human grief, something common to people. What is so significant about the Cross of Jesus? Why is it different? The answer lies in the identity of Jesus. He who died upon that Cross was Incarnate Righteousness and Love. He was God.

The Jews and Romans tortured and destroyed Him who is life eternal. Jesus was more than a man, and He knew that He was more. In His pre-incarnate state, He existed before the foundations of the earth came into being. Jesus Himself says, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (**John 17:5**). In the presence of Jesus, one felt the very presence of God. This One spoke as man never spoke. Jesus not only unveiled the failures of humanity, but He also revealed God's forgiveness in and through Himself (**17:1-3**). He who died was Incarnate God. The Incarnate Word was nailed to the Cross for the sins of mankind. Since individuals live in a world that is opposed to God, one knows that Calvary was the fate of Jesus of Nazareth. The Cross of Jesus makes actual the real nature and meaning of evil. Why? The answer lies, as stated above, in that He who died there on Calvary was Incarnate Righteousness and Love. The attempt to destroy God is laid bare at the Cross. The Cross is not just an act of Pilate, but it is also an act of God. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection of Jesus, addresses many of those instrumental in the Crucifixion:

> This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,[b] put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him (**Acts 2:23-24**).

In the Cross, Sin is manifested in all its depth. Sin is seen at its worse. It is seen for what it is; sin killed the Son of God. This act of defiance against God is the absolute high point of sin in all its rebelliousness. It is the lowest point of moral evil. One can say that this sin is more than just rebellion against God; it is the endeavor to annihilate God. Again, in this Cross, one witnesses the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and, at the same time, the amazing wonder of God's love and forgiveness. Jesus, prior to His crucifixion, says, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (**John 14:6**). In Jesus, one sees God's atoning and redeeming action. This strange man upon the Cross is not just some theological fiction but a historical fact that God was transforming the depraved in humanity into an occasion of his amazing love and costly wonder of His forgiveness. Paul expresses the necessity of

the offering of Jesus as a sacrifice this way:

> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement,[a] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:25-26**).

Death of Jesus: God's Atonement

Contrary to Islamic beliefs about the death of Christ, Paul explains why this had to occur. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, unfolds the mind of God in setting forth Jesus as atonement. It is in the same vein that John calls attention to this One who is called God's Lamb. Listen to John as he writes: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (**John 1:29**)! Today, there are over two billion followers of Christ throughout the world. In the crucifixion, one witnesses the passion of Christ in all its agony and bloody sweat as God's action in all of its mercy toward sinful humanity. This is the Gospel that has moved the world. A Gospel that does not exhilarate wonder and awe and amazement would not be a Gospel that would be worth believing or proclaiming to the world. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) reveal that forgiveness is not resolved with a philosophical theory, but by the fact of the Cross. Both righteousness and grace are fused together in this one concrete fact of Jesus' Cross. In Jesus, one discovers that goodness and love are personified. As one reflects upon the events that transpired at the Cross, one can hardly fail to recall the words of the psalmist: "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other" (**Psalm 85:10**).

Jesus, who is Goodness and Love personified, shows, through the Cross, God's grace in dealing redemptively with evil in the place where it was the most concrete, that is to say, in His sufferings and death. Once more, the Cross is something actual; it is holy love Incarnate. In this suffering, Jesus shows no trace of sentimentality or self-pity; His pity is for the world in bondage. Shortly before His crucifixion, he breaks forth with words of distress for the nation of Israel: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children" (**Luke 23:28**). Even on the Cross, one hears words of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (**23:34**). Even though God gave His Son before the foundation of the world, nevertheless, Jesus laid down His life of His own free will:

> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father (**John 10:18**).

Jesus explains to Nicodemus something about God's love for lost humanity:

> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,[f] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of

God's one and only Son.[g] 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God"[h] (**3:16-21**).

The Wonder of Salvation

When one reflects upon these penetrating words of the Messiah, one wonders why the Way of salvation no longer radiates from the faces of the redeemed. Why is there so little love and warmth among God's children? One's prayer should be that God would make this Scripture sink deep into the hearts of His people so that there may be unity within the Christian community in order to convert the world. Christians owe this message of salvation to all nations. One's outreach concerning missionary zeal is a true thermometer for the warmth of the Christian life. When one is in Christ, one is in the light. When one is in darkness, one is away from Christ. Christians must wrap themselves in God's grace in and through Jesus. From the very beginning of the Christian community, the community was a missionary society (**Matthew 28:18-20**). The world itself must also wrap itself with God's grace in and through Jesus. Without Him, one cannot have peace with God and eternal life.

If peace is ever to be the norm for the world, Christians must reflect upon the words of God as he speaks through Isaiah concerning Christ, written seven hundred years before the event happened: "I will make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (**Isaiah 49:6**). Isaiah does not leave a shadow of doubt as to His identity as he writes about the Suffering Servant and His crucifixion in **Isaiah 53**. In another Servant Song, Isaiah again, through the Holy Spirit, gives the words of God concerning the Servant of **Isaiah 53** with these words: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles" (**42:6**). Prophecy itself also vindicates the truthfulness of Christianity—that God became incarnate in order to redeem sinful humanity.

Jesus is the revealer of the divine truth and the redeemer from guilt and sin. Once more, it is in the Cross of Jesus that one witnesses God punishing sin and revealing His forgiveness. Nothing can press the love of God into the hearts of men and women as the death of the Savior. Why? It is there at Calvary that one sees what God's love takes upon Himself. His people hanged the Son of God upon a criminal's gallows. Yet, at the same time, one sees that this criminal act became a revelation of God's justice and love. Is it any wonders that Paul preached Christ and Him crucified? The Cross is something actual; it is Holy Love Incarnate. There is in this Cross a paradox—the forgiveness of God. Jesus is not a passive figure in this drama of sin and salvation, but rather, He is an Actor throughout the whole ordeal. Remember, as stated above, that Jesus says, "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (**John 10:18**). In this scenario of His final act for the salvation of the world, one observes Jesus moving from

Gethsemane to Calvary.

Jesus: "My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me"

As one reflects upon this action of Christ, one still struggles to comprehend the measure of Christ's suffering and fathom the depth of God's counsel in this act of self-sacrifice, an action that staggers the imagination. Christians are still baffled with Jesus' cry upon the Cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[b] There is no easy answer to these words. Is it possible that in this cry that Jesus identified Himself with sinners, and, thereby, staggered under the fact and burden of sin as only the Son of God could do? Is He saying "amen" on behalf of humanity to God's judgment upon sin? Is there an answer to Jesus' statement in the writings of Paul? Listen to Paul as he writes to the Corinthians: "God made him who had no sin to be sin[a] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). Olive Wyon expresses her comments with penetrating insight: "The horror and the darkness which this involved are beyond our understanding. We can only look at him—consider him—and ask that we may see the hatefulness of sin, our own sins, and repent from the bottom of our hearts."[5]

In Jesus' identity with fallen humanity, one witnesses Jesus staggering under the burden of sin as only the Son of God could do. This death of Jesus signified an AMEN on humanity's behalf concerning God's judgment upon sin. Christians still say "amen" to God's judgment upon sin. Only Jesus could see and know the full impact of sin upon humanity—enmity against God, which enmity results in desolation and loss. Is this why Jesus cried: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" How is it possible for the Son of God to feel abandoned? Surely, in this cry, one sees and hears the real suffering of Christ on the Cross. This cry is more than just the external pain of death and martyrdom and loneliness. Is it possible that in this "call" of Jesus from the Cross that one is consciously made aware of His divine commission to the human race for redemption? With this shout, one witnesses the Incarnation of God's Son in reaching His final purpose—"It is finished" (**John 19:30**). God is too high and man is too deep in His sin to reach the goal of perfection, which God requires. Jesus is the Mediator between God and humanity. He suffered despair in order to spare sinful humanity from despair.

Since men and women cannot obtain perfection, or sinlessness, in their lives, God imputes His righteousness to those who place their faith in His Son. Individuals cannot reach the target that must be reached for reconciliation between God and the human race. No one has ever been able to love God will all his or her heart. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the record of how God comes down to men and women in the human sphere in order to bring life. To do this, His death upon the Cross was necessary to reach the objective of salvation for lost humanity. People want to climb their way to heaven; God, on the other hand, descends to earth in a human body. He descends to where? The answer is: the death on the Cross, which is a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, expresses Christ's atonement this way:

> Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, [7] but made himself nothing, taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross

(**Philippians 2:6-8**)!

This death of Christ upon the Cross was necessary in order for Him to come completely into suffering humanity. His death could also be looked upon as a penal, or punishing, death. In other words, He suffered the punishing death for every person because of the unfaithfulness of men and women. If Jesus had not suffered, then every human being would experience this severe death, that is to say, a death in despair and separation from God. The rightful end of lost humanity is banishment from God and God forsakenness. If Christ had not died upon the Cross, the cry of everyone would be, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" In Jesus' sacrifice, one can avoid this cry of despair. On the Cross, one sees this kind of despair from God's Son as He calls out to the Father with the cry of loneliness and forsakenness. In His death, He cried and experienced this loneliness and forsakenness from God in order to prevent those who put their trust in Him from this tantalizing expression of grief: "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"

Repetition of this concept is helpful in order to drive home this amazing act of grace for sinful humanity. There is a sense in which He Himself had to despair of God in order to prevent individuals from forsakenness who put their trust in His Son. Jesus died in order that every person who puts his or her hope in Jesus for salvation do not have to call, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Emil Brunner captures the essence of this dilemma when he writes: "He had to despair of God for us so that we do not have to despair of God, just as he had to die the penal death so that we may become free of the punishment. He has taken all that upon himself so that we may become free of it".[6] J. S. Whale also gives insight into this most problematic cry:

> What we do know is that He who had identified Himself with sinners to the uttermost, and was here staggering under the fact and burden of sin as only the sinless Son of God could do, was here saying Amen on behalf of humanity to the judgment of God upon Sin.[7]

His death completes His identification with sinful humanity. Christ died in utter loneliness. Christianity does not shrink from the Cross. Two things are foremost in the Gospel—the Cross and the Resurrection. This is the Gospel that has moved the world. One cannot look at the Cross in isolation from the Resurrection. Both are indissolubly united. Nevertheless, these two factors are scandalous and offensive to the world at large. In spite of the fact that the world looks at these two historical events as scandalous and offensive, nevertheless, Christianity does not shrink from these two beliefs. Every Christian points to and insists upon the Cross and the Resurrection. Once more J. S. Whale captures the significance of the Cross in Christianity and the problem of evil:

> Indeed, by facing evil, and facing it here, and by not belittling or ignoring it, Christianity has greatly deepened and intensified the age-long problem which evil raises. We haven't seen the problem of sorrow and sin in all their inescapable horror until we have stood at the cross. The Church has never ceased to insist that the cross—to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness—is "crucial" for its faith. That is, it has always refused to explain suffering and sin away; it has looked physical evil and moral evil in the face as nothing else has done. The rivals of the Christian faith fail just where the

message of the cross is proclaimed.[8]

The Cross knows about suffering; it knows that affliction is a horrifying actuality. One can hardly reflect upon the Cross without a consciousness of the words of Isaiah concerning the death of the Messiah. Listen to this prophet as he pinpoints the agony of the Messiah:

> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed (**Isaiah 53:4-5**).

CONCLUSION
The Cross and Suffering

Jesus is God's answer to the problem of evil. Whenever one faces pain and suffering, one must look to Jesus "who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (**Hebrews 12:2-3**). The pain that Jesus bore upon Calvary gives one some insight about pain that enables one to bear grief. The Cross allows one to see sin in all its ugliness. In other words, the Cross is a mirror in which one sees his or her sin as one has never seen before. The Cross makes one see the real meaning of sin. One knows what sin is when one faces the Cross of Jesus. No believer can disassociate himself or herself from the scandal of the Cross. The Cross is the mightiest act of God in history. In the Cross, one witnesses God breaking into history from beyond history. God enters time in order to redeem His creation. The crucifixion witnesses a cosmic battle fought between good and evil. Not only is the Cross an outrageous fact of history, but it is also, at the same time, the triumphant act of God. At the foot of the Cross, one sees God using sin as an instrument of redemption. The Cross not only depicts the ultimate sin of humanity, but, it also exhibits God's deed of grace.

Without the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, there is not uniqueness in Christ, that is to say, there is no redemption and victory over death. Emil Brunner aptly stresses the centrality of the Gospel: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, as Paul shows us in the briefest compass in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, is a movement from God to Man."[9] As one reads the Gospels, one observes that the Resurrection of Jesus is not an appendage to the Christian faith; it is the Christian faith. It is the Resurrection alone that explains the Gospel of God. At the Cross, God speaks His word concerning His answer to the problem of evil. A Gospel proclaimed that does not excite wonder is not worth believing or proclaiming. Even though the Cross is disgraceful to many, nevertheless, it is the paradox of all existence. What right has anyone to expect forgiveness of sins? It is only at the Cross of Jesus that one can expect forgiveness. This paradox of forgiveness is not resolved by any dialectical theory of knowledge, but by the Cross of Christ as it towers in triumph over sinfulness in humanity. Jesus, as He faced the sufferings of the Cross, did not reject this humiliation. On His way from Galilee to Jerusalem, He says, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed" (**Luke 12:50**)! His Cross is not only crucial in the scheme of redemption as reported in the Gospels, but for history itself.

As one reflects upon evil and suffering in the world, the words of George Washington are to the point about morality in an immoral world: "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion."[10] Zacharias writes with precision about morality:

> Reason and intuition are pointers to the need for morality, but it is only on the character of God that morality is based. Just as God cannot self-destruct because He is pure goodness, so in drawing from His character we can avoid the breakdown of our own lives and the destruction of our purpose. God provides the blueprint of what life was intended to be. He not only shows us in His commands what we must do, but in His person what it is to *be*. He not only shows us in His commands what we must do, but in His person what it is to *be*. He clothes us with dignity and guards the dignity of everyone, regardless of origin or creed. Freedom is given but tempered by mutual respect and justice. [11]

How does God deal with evil and forgiveness? The answer is Jesus! J. S. Whale, in this same vein of evil and forgiveness, writes: "The Cross is something actual; it is Holy Love Incarnate embodying, beyond all doubt, this paradox of the forgiveness of God."[12] God is active and Christ is active in the scheme of redemption. Christ is not a passive victim in His death, but rather, He is an active participant all the way through this grueling death. One witnesses Jesus as He moves from Gethsemane to Calvary on behalf of humanity, suffering the judgment of God upon sin. It is in the Cross that one hears God's word to the problem of evil in the world. At the Cross, one views the whole problem of human suffering and sin as it comes to a burning focus in all its hideousness. Just a brief reflection upon Calvary reveals the fate of the Prince of human life in a world of corruption. As one approaches the Cross, one stands in awe as one reflects upon the greatest moral evil in the universe—killing the Man of Sorrows. What is the Gospel of redemption? It is the Cross. What is God's answer to the problem of evil in the world? It is Christ! If God destroyed evil, as some maintain that He should, God would have to alter the very nature of humanity. Freedom of will is both the glory and burden of men and women. This freedom of the will involves the ability to do good or evil. Without God, there could be no such thing as evil. For one to speak of God's goodness, there must be the opposite. The words of Amos the prophet (760 BC) are appropriate concerning the distinction between good and evil: "Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. 15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts (**Amos 5:14-15**). In conclusion, the words of Ravi Zacharias are worth citing: "We must choose between an amoral world and a world that acknowledges a moral basis for life itself, which can only be rooted in God."[13]

[1] One who adheres to Islam is called a Muslim. The central doctrine of Islam is the absolute unity of God (Allah). The Islamic faith maintains that God, at several points in history, sent prophets, one of whom was Jesus. They do not deny that Jesus was born of a virgin and a spirit from God and His Word; nevertheless, they still maintain that Jesus was a created being, not begotten. Also His crucifixion was only apparent, not real. According to Islam, Mohammed was the last of the prophets.

a Or *you at the first*

[2] H. H. Farmer, *The Word of Reconciliation: Christ's Saving Work in the Lives of Men* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 62.

f Or *and that he might turn aside God's wrath, taking away*

[3] Emil Brunner, *The Scandal of Christianity*, The Robertson Lectures (London: SCM Press, 1951), 81.

[4] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

b Or *of those not having the law* (that is, Gentiles)

a 25Or *as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin*

f Or *his only begotten Son*

g Or *God's only begotten Son*

h Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 15.

b Psalm 22:1

a Or *be a sin offering*

[5] Olive Wyon, *Consider Him: Meditation on the Passion of our Lord* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 45-46.

a Or *in the form of*

b Or *the form*

[6] Emil Brunner, *I Believe the Living God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 83. I am deeply indebted to Brunner for the genesis of my thoughts about this cry of Jesus from the Cross.

[7] J. S. Whale, *The Right to Believe* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 43.

[8] Ibid., 61-62.

[9] Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1934, 1952), 561.

[10] Cited in Ravi Zacharias, *Light in the Shadow of Jihad: The Struggle for Truth* (Orlando, FL: Multnomah Publishers, 2000), 31.

[11] Ibid., 28.

[12] J. S. Whale, *The Right to Believe,* 41.

[13] Ravi Zacharias, *Light in the Shadow of Jihad*, 33.

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